Bengaluru Monday, December 29, 2025 Pages 12 Vol 78 No 359 ₹7 www.deccanherald.com Follow us on @deccanherald

DH
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The Power of Good

Zelenskyy meets Trump in Florida

US President says diplomatic efforts to end the Ukraine war in the "final stages"

Page 11

Quickly

Murmu travels in sub off Karwar coast

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday undertook a sortie onboard Indian Navy's submarine INS Vaghsheer on the Western seaboard. Murmu is the second President to undertake a submarine sortie. The sortie, which lasted over two hours, started off the Karwar naval base in Karnataka.
Details on Page 4

Digvijaya faces pushback from Cong leaders

Digvijaya Singh's nudge to the Congress to learn from the RSS saw a pushback from other leaders on Sunday with Pawan Khera and Manickam Tagore saying there is nothing for the Congress to learn from a "divisive force" even as Shashi Tharoor backed the need for strengthening the party.
Details on Page 5

Hadi murder suspects fled to India: B'desh

BSF rejects claim about student leader's assassins

DHAKA/SHILLONG, PTI

Two primary suspects in the murder of the July Uprising leader Sharif Osman Hadi have fled Bangladesh and are believed to be in India, a top Dhaka Metropolitan Police officer said Sunday even as BSF officials rejected the claim.

Hadi, 32, was shot in the head on December 12 during an election campaign in Dhaka. He was airlifted to Singapore for advanced treatment but died on December 18.

"The suspects, Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh, crossed into the Indian state of Meghalaya with the help of local associates," Additional Police Commissioner (Crime and Operations) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) S N Md Nazrul Islam told a press conference at the DMP Media Centre.

"According to our information, the suspects entered India via the Haluaghat border. After crossing, they were initially received by an individual named Purti. Later, a taxi driver named Sami transported them to Tura city in Meghalaya," The Daily Star said, quoting Islam.

He added that the police have received informal reports suggesting the two individuals who assisted the fugitives have since been detained by authorities in India.

The DMP officer said the Bangladesh government is actively working to bring the suspects back. "We are maintaining communication with Indian authorities through both formal and informal channels to ensure their arrest and extradition," he added.
▸ Bangladesh, Page 4

Supporters chant slogans following the death of student leader Sharif Osman Hadi, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. REUTERS FILE

What B'desh cops say

- Two suspects, Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh, crossed into Meghalaya
- Moved to Tura city in Meghalaya
- Two individuals who assisted the fugitives have been detained by Indian authorities

What Indian officials say

- B'desh claims 'unfounded', 'misleading'
- Not detected any cross-border movement
- BSF personnel on high alert along border

"According to our information, the suspects entered India via the Haluaghat border. After crossing, they were initially received by an individual named Purti. Later, a taxi driver named Sami transported them to Tura city in Meghalaya

S N MD NAZRUL ISLAM,
Additional Police Commissioner, Dhaka Metropolitan Police

NGT notice to K'taka over diversion of KSPCB funds

DH IMPACT

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government's efforts to get over Rs 400 crore from the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) to fund works related to prevention of man-animal conflict has hit a legal hurdle, with the NGT taking up a suo motu case.

In the report 'Government's efforts to tap KSPCB funds set to hit legal hurdle', published in the November 23 edition, *DH* had reported about the state government's letter seeking Rs 100 crore grant, Rs 126 crore interest-free loan as well as Rs 200 crore loan at an interest of 7.5%.

Besides reporting on the deliberations of the KSPCB, *DH* had reported concerns of officials that other states were making efforts to divert funds from their respective pollution control boards. This comes at a time pollution control boards are reeling under large-scale vacancies, which have compromised their work.

The principal bench of the National Green Tribunal, which ordered notice to Karnataka and other states, reproduced a part of the *DH* report.
▸ NGT, Page 4

Govt's efforts to tap KSPCB funds set to hit legal hurdle

NGT had slammed diversion of funds from CPCB

The DH report published in its Nov 23 edition.

25% of 108 ambulances in state under maintenance

Patients could be impacted due to delayed response

DH SPECIAL

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Close to 25% of the 108 ambulance fleet in Karnataka is under maintenance, according to data, a development that could have adverse consequences for patients.

As per data available with the health department, Karnataka has a fleet of 715 ambulances under the 108 ambulance programme, of which only 530 of them are available for patients at present.

The reduced fleet impacts the response time of ambulances during an emergency. A senior official from the health department told *DH* that absence of an ambulance could impact the patient's health significantly.

The usual response time for these ambulances is 20 minutes and if they are not at strategic positions, the response time could go up.

"Ambulance caters to emergencies and the fleet under the 108 is positioned at strategic points so that they can reach the emergency spot at the earliest. Sometimes, the lack of even one ambulance may delay the treatment for an emergency patient. We have received a few complaints in this regard," a senior official said on the condition of anonymity.
▸ Ambulances, Page 4

In numbers

715 Total number of ambulances under 108

530 108 Ambulances working on ground

185 Number of 108 ambulances under repair or maintenance

NY: 10L people to hit B'luru streets

BENGALURU, DHNS: With more than 10 lakh people expected to step out across Bengaluru to celebrate the New Year, the Bengaluru City Police have deployed around 20,000 personnel to ensure peaceful celebrations, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Sunday after a review meeting with the city police.
Details on Page 2

Panel to look into student union polls

BENGALURU, DHNS: KPCC president DK Shivakumar announced on Sunday that he had formed a nine-member panel to advise on conducting student union elections. "We have to develop new leaders at the college (level). So, I have formed a 9-member committee headed by Sharan Prakash," he said.
Details on Page 4

JOINT RAIDS

17 ltrs of chemicals seized in B'luru drug bust

BENGALURU, DHNS

Three drug manufacturing and storage units were busted in different parts of Bengaluru, with the raids yielding 17 litres of chemicals, the city police said on Sunday.

The operation was conducted jointly by the Maharashtra Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) and the Bengaluru City police but both contradicted each other over the value of drugs seized on Saturday at Spandana Layout Colony in Bagaluru, N G Gollahalli in Kothanur and Yarappanahalli in Avalahalli.

After the raids, the Maharashtra ANTF said they seized mephedrone worth Rs 55.88 crore, along with machinery and chemicals, from two manufacturing units and one storage facility, some of which were operating as event management or warehouse businesses.

However, City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said the value of 4 kg of seized drugs was Rs 1.2 crore and not Rs 55.88 crore as claimed by the ANTF.

The raids yielded 17 litres of chemicals and their composition and value were yet to be ascertained, he added.
▸ Drug, Page 4

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*Terms and Conditions Apply. Savings applicable from 22nd December till 31st December 2025. Total Savings mentioned is a sum of savings from cash back, Nil processing fee and 5 free services (3 standard free services and 2 additional free services). Savings of free service are towards scheduled labour charges. Applicable offers may vary across models/states. Savings on Nil PF may vary across locations depending on financer. Finance at the sole discretion of financer. Stunts have been performed by experts, under professional supervision, in a controlled and enclosed environment, in isolation from general public or public roads. Do not attempt to replicate these stunts and always follow traffic and safety rules. Pulsar 125 offer only on neon & carbon fibre models. Check with Bajaj dealer for more details. Road Side Assistance is provided by third parties and is subject to their terms and conditions.

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Protests erupt in Indiranagar over restobar next to school

Residents call for measures to ensure child and fire safety

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Indiranagar residents are protesting the establishment of a restobar near 80 Feet Road for its proximity to a school and for flouting fire safety norms.

A large orange facade with glass panels and "YU" written in English and Kannada has come up 70 metres from the National Public School on 12th A Main Road in HAL 2nd Stage.

"Actually, as the crow flies, compound to compound, the distance between the establishment and the school is about 45 metres. Even at 70 metres, it is a violation of the Excise Act, which prohibits the sale of liquor within 100 metres of any educational institution," said Meenakshi Prabhu, Secretary of HAL 3rd Stage Taxpayers and Residents' Association.

The association has approached the Excise Department to look into the matter.

A letter from the National Public School staff and parents has also been submitted to the authorities, raising concerns over liquor being sold close to the school.

A large orange façade with glass panels and "YU" written in English and Kannada has come up near the National Public School on 12th A Main Road, HAL 2nd Stage. DH PHOTO/ASRA MAVAD

Residents have also pointed out that the structure does not adhere to the National Building Code and violates fire safety norms. "There are no setbacks, and in places, the bar is also abutting the residences. Initially, before the Occupancy Certificate (OC) was issued, the building was pretty much adhering to the rules, but once they got the OC, they completely went ham. At one point, their chimney was facing right into my house," said Lata, whose house is located right behind the restobar.

> **LATA**
> A resident
> "Before the Occupancy Certificate (OC) was issued, the building was pretty much adhering to the rules, but once they got the OC, they completely went ham. At one point, their chimney was facing right into my house.

Online petition

Earlier this year, residents launched an online petition against the bar. They also moved the high court to get a stay on the ongoing construction.

"When we reached out to the authorities, we were informed that the owner of the establishment has connections with politicians such as the deputy chief minister and other higher-ups," Meenakshi said.

On December 24, officials from the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) issued a notice to the restobar owners for flouting construction norms.

"We have asked them to immediately stop construction and have been monitoring regularly.

"In addition to the lack of setbacks, parking also remains a major concern. In their initial plan, they had mentioned a parking space for 11 vehicles, but no such area has been created. They have been asked to adhere to the original plan and abide by fire safety norms," the assistant executive engineer, Bengaluru Central City Corporation (JB Nagar), told *DH*.

Management stays mum

The restobar's management did not respond to our calls or texts for comment.

Bizman arrested in POCSO case; dupes victim's sister

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bagalagunte police have arrested a 27-year-old businessman on charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The accused has been identified as Shubham Shukla, a native of Uttar Pradesh and a cloth merchant.

A senior police officer said that Shukla had allegedly cheated the victim's sister on the pretext of marriage. He escaped with Rs 75 lakh in cash over several months and gold ornaments weighing 550 grams from her residence. A case was registered by the victim's father on December 13.

Shubham Shukla

Based on the complaint, Shukla was arrested from his house in Dasarahalli, Peenya.

During interrogation, police learnt the accused had also allegedly sexually abused the complainant's minor sister in a flat.

A separate POCSO case was registered.

According to police, the accused initially befriended the victim as he was staying in the same locality and gradually gained the confidence of her family.

He later lured her elder sister into a relationship, convincing her and her family that he had secured a job in Mumbai. Trusting him, the woman accompanied Shukla and the two reportedly lived together in a rented flat. The victim later learnt that Shukla was already married.

When confronted, he promised to obtain a divorce and assured her of marriage.

Police said even the accused's wife had spoken to the victim, claiming she would divorce him, which led the woman to continue the relationship.

However, the victim later discovered that Shukla was deceiving another woman in a similar manner and exposed him.

Following this, Shukla subjected her to physical and mental harassment.

20,000 policemen deployed as 10 lakh expected for NYE bash

Police step up security, traffic management & surveillance

BENGALURU, DHNS

With over 10 lakh people expected on New Year's Eve, Bengaluru police will deploy 20,000 personnel to maintain law and order, Home Minister G Parameshwara said.

After reviewing preparedness with the city police, Parameshwara said major crowd congregation points have been identified, including MG Road and the Brigade Road stretch, Church Street, Indiranagar, Koramangala and Residency Road, where large numbers of revellers are expected.

Home Minister G Parameshwara with (L) DG&IGP MA Saleem and City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh at a press conference in Bengaluru on Sunday. DH PHOTOS/PUSHKAR V

Apart from law and order personnel, nearly 2,100 traffic police personnel have been deployed to regulate traffic and prevent congestion during the late night celebrations.

Heat map, AI surveillance

For the first time, police will use a heat map system to monitor crowd density in real time. Locations will be marked in red for high density, yellow for moderate and green for low density, with live monitoring from the command centre.

Police will also deploy AI-based facial recognition cameras to identify people with criminal backgrounds. From a counter terrorism perspective, heightened security arrangements have been put in place across the city.

Over the last five days, police have booked 2,854 cases of drunk driving, the home minister said.

More safety measures

- The deployment includes 14,000 law and order personnel, 2,500 traffic police, 88 KSRP platoons, 21 CAR units, 266 Hoysala vehicles, 250 Cobra vehicles and 400 traffic wardens, along with civil defence and home guards.

- Crowd control arrangements include water jets, watch towers, focus lights at 180 locations, drones, and 250 CCTV cameras across the city

- A traffic congestion map has been prepared and will be released in the public domain to help commuters plan their travel. Special transport arrangements have been made at eight locations where taxis may not be available.
- Ambulances, safety shelters, and emergency response teams will be on standby.
- As part of crowd management, police have introduced a QR code-based information system distributed to pubs, restaurants, and other public places. The QR code provides safety guidelines, emergency contact details, and instructions for the public to follow during the celebrations.

NYE: Traders' body issues security advisory to members

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bangalore Traders Association has issued a security advisory to its member traders and establishments ahead of New Year celebrations, anticipating heavy footfall across key commercial areas.

With last minute shopping underway, the association has urged heightened vigilance in busy localities such as MG Road, Brigade Road, Church Street, Residency Road, St Marks Road, Commercial Street, and Avenue Road.

City police have instructed traders to ensure that all CCTV cameras are functional and that additional cameras are installed within shop premises where required. The association has made it mandatory for establishments to ensure that all CCTV cameras are recording, with a minimum archival capacity of 15 days.

An advisory has also been issued to staff members and store managers to remain vigilant and cooperative throughout the evening of December 31. Traders have been directed to cooperate fully with the police, including adhering to prescribed timings on New Year's Eve.

A vendor sorts clothes at a weekend roadside market.

"The safety of our customers, staff, and property tops our priority list. This advisory is a standard preventive measure to ensure that celebrations remain joyous and incident free."

"We urge all traders to implement these steps diligently and maintain a seamless channel of communication with the police," said Sreesh R Babu, president of the Bangalore Traders Association.

"We have included traders across the city, and our traders include jewellers, retailers, clothiers, and others. We are expecting a huge crowd of shopping enthusiasts, and we have requested everyone to remain vigilant to prevent any mishaps," said Rajesh Bantiya, secretary of the association.

The association has also requested traders to ensure adequate lighting and decorations at their outlets.

Drunk student's speeding Audi kills 28-year-old cashier in HSR Layout

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 28-year-old man was killed after a speeding car, allegedly driven by a drunk student, ran him down in HSR Layout Sector 7 on Saturday night.

The deceased, Santosh, was a native of Bailhongal, Belagavi district. He worked as a cashier at a hotel and lived in a PG in Rajiv Gandhi Nagar.

Abdul Rehman

The accident occurred just after midnight on December 22 at 27th Cross in HSR Layout. Santosh was walking to his PG after dinner with friends when an Audi, driven by 23-year-old Abdul Rehman, reportedly sped through the area.

The vehicle veered off the lane and struck Santosh, tossing him several feet into the air. The car then crashed into two parked vehicles.

Bystanders rushed Santosh to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead.

Police arrested Rehman, a BBA student and resident of HSR Layout Sector 7. The car belonged to his mother. At the time, Rehman was accompanied by a friend.

"The accused was driving recklessly. We have collected his blood samples to confirm the level of alcohol consumption, and the reports are awaited. He has been booked under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Motor Vehicles Act, and is in custody," a police officer said.

Traffic relief soon as Challaghatta railway underpass nears completion

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is fast-tracking the construction of a railway underpass near Challaghatta using state-of-the-art box-pushing technology.

The project aims to connect Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout (NPKL) with Mysuru Road, easing chronic traffic bottlenecks in the area. With 29 metres of box-pushing work completed and only 13 metres remaining, officials said the underpass is likely to be ready within days.

Part of an ambitious eight-lane road project, the underpass runs beneath the Bengaluru–Mysuru railway line and is expected to significantly reduce congestion on the busy Bengaluru–Mysuru highway.

A view of the ongoing construction of the Challaghatta railway underpass. DH PHOTO

The project was launched earlier this month.

"Conventional construction methods would have disrupted train services. The box-pushing technique, which involves hydraulically inserting pre-cast 1,000-tonne concrete boxes beneath the tracks, allows work to proceed without halting rail operations," an official present at the site said.

Local residents and commuters have welcomed the development.

Rajesh Kumar, a resident of the area, said, "We've waited for years for better access. This underpass will cut our commute time by half and reduce the chaos at level crossings."

Arun Patel, a regular commuter on Mysuru Road, said the existing bottlenecks were frustrating. "The underpass will streamline traffic and help save fuel, especially for those who travel frequently to Mysuru," Patel added.

Another commuter pointed out that motorists currently take a seven-kilometre detour through narrow village roads to reach the highway. "During peak hours, these roads are choked with trucks. The underpass will make the commute to the metro station much safer," he said.

A local resident added that without the underpass, the Major Arterial Road (MAR) remained incomplete. "Once it opens, travel time to the city will be reduced by at least 20 minutes," he said.

The BDA said the underpass would integrate with ongoing metro and road expansion projects. Once the structural work is completed, road surfacing and drainage works will be taken up to make the stretch motorable.

Key benefits

- **NPKL residents:** Direct access for thousands of site allottees.
- **Metro users:** Seamless connectivity to the Challaghatta metro station from the Magadi Road side.
- **Industrial hubs:** Easier movement of goods and workers from Kumbalgodu and nearby industrial areas.
- **Traffic decongestion:** Provides a parallel alternative to NICE Road, easing pressure on arterial junctions.

PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner.

Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @ deccanherald.co.in

The trees are inclined towards a residential house directly opposite, posing a serious risk.

Dangerously leaning trees in Rajajinagar 4th Block

There are two large trees with thick trunks located in Rajajinagar 4th Block, between 5th Main and 6th Main, near Kumar Vyasa Mantap/Spandana Hospital, that have been leaning dangerously to one side for a considerable period.

In their current condition, the trees are inclined towards a residential house directly opposite, posing a serious risk of falling and causing severe damage to property and endangering lives.

We request the authorities to inspect the trees at the earliest and take appropriate, preventive action.

CA Sathyaprakash
Rajajinagar

Lifts not functioning at post office

Residents of Padmanabhanagar, especially senior citizens, appreciate the Postal Department for relocating the post office from Banashankari II Stage to the new building near the 15A last bus stop.

However, the relocated post office is situated on the second floor, and the lift frequently does not function due to the absence of generator backup during power outages. This causes considerable hardship.

We request the authorities concerned to ensure uninterrupted power supply so that the lift functions at all times, making the post office accessible to all.

SG Prabhakar
Padmanabhanagar

Urgent need for a skywalk

There is an urgent need to construct a skywalk across Tumakuru Road, connecting Vaishnavi Sapphire Mall to the RMC Yard side in Yeshwantpur.

Every day, thousands of pedestrians, including students, labourers, and passengers, exiting the Yeshwantpur Railway Station, are forced to cross this heavily trafficked road, often risking their lives due to fast-moving vehicles.

The absence of a safe pedestrian crossing has led to frequent near-misses and poses a serious safety concern.

The construction of a skywalk would significantly reduce the risk to pedestrians and ensure safe and convenient movement across the road.

Satish Allagi
Yeshwantpur

Poor street lighting on service roads along Airport Road

While the main carriageway on the Airport Road flyover is adequately lit, most of the existing streetlights on the service roads are either too widely spaced or too weak to illuminate the entire stretch.

In several locations, the lights are also obstructed by the ongoing metro construction, leaving large portions of the service roads poorly lit.

These service roads are used not only by airport-bound passengers but also by a large number of residents from Yelahanka, Sahakarnagar, Jakkur, and surrounding areas.

Given their importance, they must be accorded equal priority to ensure safety and prevent accidents, crime, and other untoward incidents.

We request the authorities to assess the lighting along these service roads and relocate or augment streetlights where necessary so that the entire Airport Road corridor is well illuminated. Improved lighting will also discourage motorists from using high-beam headlights within city limits, enhancing overall road safety.

Vijay
Yelahanka

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Kuvempu Jayanthi: Presided by AS Nagarajaswamy; Nalluru Prasad RK, Ramanna H Kodihosahalli, CK Ramegowda, M Prakashmurthy; Kannada Sangharsh Samiti; Kuvempu Pratime, Lalbagh west gate, Rashtriya Vidyalaya Road; 9 am.

Kuvempu Jayanti silver jubilee: Nirmalanandanath Swamiji to preside; DK Shivakumar, Dinesh Gundu Rao, Dr CN AshwathNnarayan, Purushottama Bilimale, CH Hanumantraya, C Somashekhar, Vatal Nagaraj, Saptagirigowda; Kannada Karnataka Defense Forum, Sukhasagar Mall, Third Floor Hall, Y Ramachandra Road, Gubbi Veeranna Theater Road, Gandhinagar; 11.30 am.

'Bommana Halliya Kindari Jogi' Lecture: KV Narayana, 'Kuvempu for New Readers'; Beetle book shop, near Vinayanagar metro station; from 5 pm onwards.

Kadalekayi Parishe photo exhibition: Venkatesh; Karnataka Chitrakala Parishad; Kumarakrupa Road; 10 am.

CULTURAL

Drama: 'Gulamana's Swatantra Yatre'; directed by BR Venkataramana Aitala; Karnataka Drama Academy, Kasturba Theater, Mahatma Gandhi park, Bharathnagar; 7 pm.

Margashira Festival: Praveen Godkhandi, Shadaj Godkhandi, Karin Godkhandi; Surabharati, HRBR Layout; 6.30 pm.

'Aagu Nee Aniketana' concert: Jayaram Raipur, Chandra Aswath, BR Lakshmanrao, Munikrishna, Na Damodar Shetty, M Narasimha, PS Sadashiva, YK Muddakrishna, Ananda Madalagere, Sunita Murali, Nagar Srinivasa Udupa; Karnataka Sugam Sangeet Parishad; Udayabhanu Kalasangha, Kempegowdanagar; 5 pm.

Invites to be published in this column should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Mist

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	27.0°C
Minimum	16.0°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	51%
Sunset (Dec 29)	6:02 pm
Sunrise (Dec 30)	6:40 am
Moonrise	12:29 pm
Moonset	12:16 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

C'durga bus inferno: 5 bodies handed over to relatives

CHITRADURGA, DHNS: The bodies of five travellers burnt alive in the bus inferno at Javanagondanahalli in Hiriyur taluk on December 25, were handed over to their relatives in Chitradurga on Sunday.

Bindu (28) and her daughter Greya (5) of Bengaluru; H C Manasa (26) of Channarayapatna in Hassan district; A M Navya (27) of Ankanahalli in Mandya district and Rashmi R Mahale (25) of Bhatkal were charred to death in the private bus they were travelling in. The bus caught fire after being hit by a container truck. A total of seven persons lost their lives in the accident.

The bodies were charred beyond recognition and hence DNA test was conducted at Forensic Science Laboratory in Hubballi for ascertaining the identity. The report reached the authorities on Sunday, after which the bodies kept at the mortuary of Chitradurga district hospital were handed over to relatives.

The police said post mortem was conducted on the body of bus driver Rafiq who died at a hospital in Hubballi, and the mortal remains were handed over to his kin.

Container truck driver Kuldip Yadav also perished in the accident. His family members arrived from Haryana and performed the last rites in Hiriyur, the police added.

Modi hails efforts of Kannadigas in Dubai

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded efforts of Kannadigas living in Dubai to teach their children the language.

In his monthly "Maan Ki Baat" radio programme, he said the effort to stay connected to one's roots is not limited to India.

"Indians living in different corners of the world are also playing their part. Another example that takes us outside the country is Dubai," he said.

"Kannada families living there asked themselves an important question: Our children are moving ahead in tech world, but aren't they moving away from their language? This is where Kannada Paathashaale was born," he said.

"An initiative where children are taught to teach, learn, write, and speak Kannada. Today, more than a thousand children are associated with it. Truly, Kannada Nadu, Nudi Namma Hemme. (The land and language of Kannada are our pride.)," he said.

No relief, no rehab a week after demolitions, say activists

Displaced families live under open sky in harsh winter

KORAH ABRAHAM
BENGALURU, DHNS

More than a week after a demolition drive uprooted over 400 families near Yelahanka in Bengaluru, the government is yet to announce any immediate relief or a rehabilitation package.

More than a week after a demolition drive uprooted over 400 families near Yelahanka, the Karnataka government is yet to announce any immediate relief or a rehabilitation package, activists working with the displaced have alleged, even as people continue to live under the open sky in the city's harsh winter.

"There has been nothing from Day One till now - no immediate relief, no rehabilitation package, nothing," Nandini, an activist associated with Dudiyuva Janara Vedike, which has been coordinating relief efforts at the site tells *DH*.

The demolition drive was carried out by the Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) on December 20 in Waseem Layout and Fakeer Colony in North Bengaluru. This left families without shelter, forcing many to erect temporary tents using tarpaulin sheets.

"Bengaluru is biting cold at night and early morning, and then very warm during the day. People, including children and the elderly, are living completely exposed to these conditions," Nandini said.

Civil society steps in

In the absence of official relief, a range of civil society groups, NGOs, Left parties and trade unions have stepped in to provide food, blankets and other essentials. "At present, it is individuals and organisations who are ensuring people's immediate needs are met. Without them, the situation would have been far worse," says Isaac Amruthraj, state president, Slum Janara Sanghatane.

Activists and residents met Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, seeking urgent intervention.

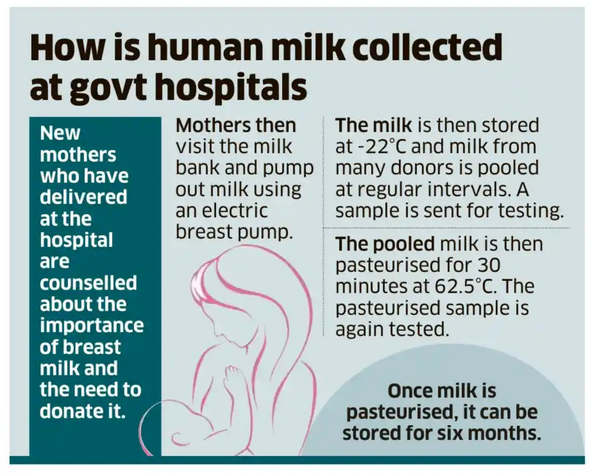
According to Nandini, the minister said the land currently falls under the Greater Bengaluru Authority and that efforts would be made to transfer it back to the Revenue Department to facilitate relocation.

"He told us rehabilitation could take three to six months. Until then, he said people could continue living in the same open area with tarpaulin sheets and tents," she said.

Earlier, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar had said that the government would provide housing elsewhere to those found "eligible" under the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Scheme. Shivakumar told reporters on Saturday that whoever lives in Karnataka with valid documents will be provided the necessary support and that he had instructed officials about the same. However, activists stress that nothing has been issued in writing.

"The government can say anything to the public or to the media. But unless it comes as a circular or a written order, nothing will happen on the ground," Nandini said.

Tensions flared again on Friday, when GBA officials arrived to fence off the land. Residents and activists opposed the move, insisting that no fencing or takeover should be allowed until rehabilitation is assured.


How is human milk collected at govt hospitals
New mothers who have delivered at the hospital are counselled about the importance of breast milk and the need to donate it.
Mothers then visit the milk bank and pump out milk using an electric breast pump.
The milk is then stored at -22°C and milk from many donors is pooled at regular intervals. A sample is sent for testing.
The pooled milk is then pasteurised for 30 minutes at 62.5°C. The pasteurised sample is again tested.
Once milk is pasteurised, it can be stored for six months.

Govt to open human milk bank at every district hospital

Move aimed at combating infant malnutrition

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka is planning to establish human milk banks in all district hospitals in the state, according to Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao.

In a written response to a question raised in the recently concluded Belagavi legislature session, he said that the department would set up such banks in every district government hospital in a phased manner.

The department has established 12 human milk banks and is in the process of setting up eight more under the National Health Mission.

The human milk banks have come as a blessing for preterm and underweight babies whose mothers are unable to feed them or have low milk supply.

Health department data shows that approximately 3,800 babies have reaped the benefits from the 12 milk banks in the first eight months of this financial year.

"Human milk is nutritious and very important for the development of preterm and underweight babies. However, in cases where the mother is ill or undergoing treatment for other medical conditions and is unable to feed the baby, donated human milk comes as a saviour. We have seen it helps hundreds of babies at our facility," said Dr Usha B K, nodal officer and in charge of the Comprehensive Lactation Management Centre at HSIS Gosha Hospital in Bengaluru.

Experts believe setting up these banks in every district will immensely help bring down infant malnutrition.

"In rural areas, there is still no awareness that a mother can pump out the milk and help other infants. Setting up such banks will increase awareness and help many infants," said a senior health department official who works closely with the rural population.

Many infants are fed formula milk when the mother's milk supply is low or the mother is absent for some reason.

Replacing it with breast milk from other mothers could increase nutrition drastically and help prevent gastrointestinal issues, experts said.

BJP slams Venugopal over tweet on Kogilu demolition

Pressure tactics on state govt insult to federalism: Ashoka

BENGALURU, DHNS

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra on Sunday slammed AICC general secretary K C Venugopal over his tweet regarding the demolition of houses at Kogilu layout, adding that every major decision was "shaped in Delhi" and not Bengaluru.

Vijayendra

On Saturday, Venugopal had tweeted that the CM and the DCM had assured him that "they will personally engage with the affected families".

On Saturday, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar had defended the government's decision and lashed out at Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's criticism.

Taking to X (formerly Twitter), Vijayendra said: "A question to CM @siddaramaiah and DCM @DKShivakumar: after passionately defending the government's actions in Kogilu village and sermonising on X to the Kerala CM yesterday, will you show the same courage and address that message to your AICC boss @kcvenugopalmp? Or did your stand conveniently change after a call from Delhi?"

Terming the act 'beyond political hypocrisy', the BJP state president said: "It is a direct affront to the people of Karnataka, who voted for a government in Bengaluru, not for an invisible authority issuing commands from Delhi".

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka also slammed Venugopal. "Is he Super CM, or does the Congress high command believe elected state governments function on Delhi diktats," Ashoka asked on X.

"Karnataka is governed by a constitutionally elected Chief Minister and Cabinet, not by an AICC General Secretary. Expressing a party opinion is one thing, issuing moral sermons and pressure tactics on a state government is blatant overreach and an insult to federalism," the LoP added.

Central leaders flay Cong's 'high-command culture'

Slamming Congress leader K C Venugopal for his post on social media on demolition of illegal settlement near Yelahanka in Bengaluru, BJP central leaders on Sunday accused the Congress top leadership of continuing its "high-command culture" and undermining the authority of Karnataka's elected leadership, reports *DHNS* from New Delhi.

"First it was Rajiv Gandhi who publicly humiliated the towering Karnataka leader Shri Veerendra Patil. Now, decades later, the pattern repeats, with AICC General Secretary K C Venugopal lecturing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on how to run the state," BJP IT cell chief Amit Malaviya posted on X.

"It is astonishing that a chief minister elected by the people of Karnataka is being publicly admonished by a party functionary sitting in Delhi. If all decisions must be cleared by Rahul Gandhi's coterie, why have a Cabinet chosen by people of Karnataka at all?," he posted.

The BJP leader said it is not just an insult to Karnataka's leadership, but an insult to people of Karnataka themselves.

BJP general secretary (organisation) B L Santosh also criticised Venugopal's post.

"Here goes Kannada Pride to a toss & in comes appeasement politics of @INCIndia to the forefront. Never forget - Never forgive," he posted on X.

Water bill: BWSSB's 100% int waiver in one-time settlement

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a big relief for water bill defaulters, BWSSB has announced a "one-time settlement scheme, offering 100% waiver on interest and penalties for those who clear outstanding principal amount.

The urban development department has officially approved the initiative, expected to provide a 3-month window from Jan to Mar 2026 for consumers to get accounts regularised.

BWSSB chairman Ram Prasath Manohar said on Sunday that the scheme was designed to be completely transparent and "middleman-free". He said the board was adopting the "Hyderabad model," where a similar initiative saw huge success in recovering long-pending dues.

"Once customer pays principal in a single instalment, software at the back-end will automatically waive interest," he said.

The board is developing a dedicated mobile app for registrations, alongside its official website. While residential consumers can apply online, special teams will personally visit government buildings and commercial complexes to facilitate the process.

The official launch date and specific payment window will be announced after consultations with Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar.

MARUTI SUZUKI
NEXA
ROAD TAX?
WE HAVE TAKEN CARE OF IT!
GRAND VITARA STRONG HYBRID WITH
OFFERS OF UP TO ₹ 3.74 LAKH*.
GRAND VITARA
STRONG HYBRID
R17 MACHINED ALLOY WHEELS
8-WAY DRIVER POWERED SEAT
6 AIRBAGS AS STANDARD
5 YEAR WARRANTY~
3 YEARS + 2 YEARS COMPLIMENTARY
BENEFITS UP TO
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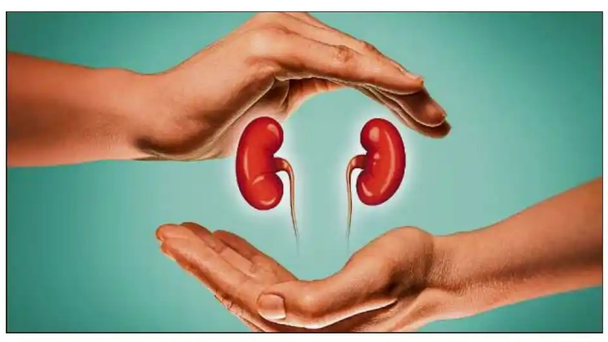
With 4,922 patients on waiting list, kidney is most sought-after organ

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS



While around 300 people received a kidney transplant this year, demand continues to outstrip availability. Currently, the waiting period for kidney transplant is two to three years.

As many as 4,922 patients in the state are on the waiting list for kidney transplant, making kidney the most sought-after organ.

This number is as per data of December 2025. While around 300 people received a kidney transplant this year, demand continues to outstrip availability.

Government officials and doctors attribute the growing crisis primarily to the sharp and largely uncontrolled rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which are driving cases of chronic kidney disease.

Numbers speak

Analysis of data shows that the number of registered patients awaiting other organs is significantly lower: 698 for liver, 118 for heart and 44 for lungs. In 2025, about 150 people donated kidneys benefiting 300 recipients, while 161 donated livers, 49 donated hearts and 29 donated lungs. Currently, the waiting period for kidney transplant is two to three years.

Dr D P Arun Kumar, programme officer of Jeevasarthakathe or State Organ Tissue and Transplant Organisation under the health and family welfare department, told *DH* that the rising burden of NCDs had affected both recipients and potential donors.

"The demand for kidneys is higher because of rising NCDs and even some donors are affected. If diabetes or hypertension is uncontrolled or the kidney is already affected, we cannot consider such donors," he said.

To determine donor suitability, blood group and HLA (Human Leukocyte Antigen) matching is mandatory.

"Unless a parent or sibling is donating, HLA will not completely match. Hence, we do not aim for 100% match because that can be managed with immunosuppressants," Arun Kumar said.

Unlike liver transplants, where recipients are prioritised based on disease severity, kidney transplants are allotted based on seniority of registration. "Since dialysis can sustain patients till a kidney becomes available, we follow seniority," he said.

Financial assistance

To reduce financial burden, BPL card holders receive Rs 2 lakh for transplant and Rs 1 lakh annually for post-transplant care in both government and private hospitals. At present, the Institute of Nephro Urology at Victoria Hospital, Bengaluru, and KIMS Hubballi offer free kidney transplants. The health department is planning to extend free transplantation services to KR Hospital in Mysuru.

Dr Kristina George, consultant nephrologist and renal transplant specialist, said while openness to organ donation had improved slightly, India remained far below global benchmarks.

"Mistrust in medical care, lack of awareness and religious beliefs prevent families from consenting to deceased organ donation," she said.

This year, 13 families refused consent, despite donors being eligible.

Transplant counselling

Acknowledging the challenge, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao told *DH* that the government planned to introduce structured transplant counselling for families of the deceased in government hospitals.

2 suspects in youth leader's murder case fled to India, claim B'desh cops

Bangladesh, from Page 1

Meanwhile, security agencies in Meghalaya dismissed the claims, saying they are "unfounded" and "misleading".

"There is no evidence to suggest that any individual crossed the international border from the Haluaghat sector into Meghalaya. The BSF has neither detected nor received any report of such an incident," BSF chief in Meghalaya, Inspector General O P Opadhyay said.

BSF officials said the personnel deployed along the international border have been kept on a high state of alert at all times to avert any untoward incident, particularly in view of the unrest and volatile situation prevailing in the neighbouring country.

The force reiterated that the international border in the sector was under constant surveillance and any attempt at illegal cross-border movement would be promptly detected and dealt with. A senior Meghalaya police officer also said that there was "no input or intelligence to corroborate" the claim of the suspects' presence in the Garo Hills region.

The officer said local police units had not detected any such movement and coordination with central agencies was ongoing.

Hadi, spokesperson of Inquilab Moncho, was a prominent youth leader during the July-August 2024 mass street protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government last year.

He was also a parliamentary candidate for the upcoming February 12 elections.

So far, 11 people have been arrested in connection with the killing.

DKS forms party panel to advise on student union polls

Nine-member committee to give report in 15 days

BENGALURU, DHNS:

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president D K Shivakumar announced on Sunday that he had formed a nine-member committee to advise on conducting student union elections.

Speaking at the Congress foundation day programme at Bharat Jodo bhavan, Shivakumar, also the deputy chief minister, said, "We have to develop new leaders at college (level). So, I have formed a 9-member committee headed by (Medical Education Minister) Sharanprakash Patil".

Earlier, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had urged the Karnataka government to restart student elections. Shivakumar and veteran Congress leaders B K Hariprasad, Ramalinga Reddy and H M Revanna are themselves products of the student movement.

In a letter dated Saturday, Shivakumar announced the formation of the committee headed by Patil.

The other members are Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar, MLCs Saleem Ahmed, Basanagouda Badarli, Puttanna, MLAs Rizwan Arshad and B Shivanna, state youth Congress president H S Manjunath and state NSUI president Keerthi Ganesh. The committee has been given 15 days to submit its report.

Ahmed, also the government chief whip in the Council, told *DH* that the student union elections, banned in 1990 when Congress was in power, would resume in the coming academic year.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah greets the crowd as his deputy D K Shivakumar looks on at the Congress' foundation day event in Bengaluru on Sunday. DH PHOTO

Applications for GBA elections

On the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections, Shivakumar said aspiring candidates could start filling forms from Sunday itself, up to January 15.

The deputy chief minister said the zilla panchayat and taluk panchayat elections would be held soon.

"We cannot stop ZP and TP elections. We are conducting. In two-three months, we must prepare for it. Already the chief minister has told Priyank Kharge (RDPR minister) to resolve all reservation and legal concerns and conduct the elections in two months".

'Stop hero worship, start party worship'

After Shivakumar concluded his speech, some of his supporters shouted "D K Shivakumar ge jai."

The slogans came even as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was present on the stage, awaiting his turn to speak.

At this point, a visibly irked Shivakumar came back to the mike and said, "Who is that? stop hero worship, begin party worship".

25% of 108 ambulances under repair

Ambulances, from Page 1

Harsh Gupta, Principal Secretary (Health), acknowledged to *DH* that a few ambulances were under maintenance. But, Gupta claimed, this had caused problems only during morning hours.

"We had conducted an optimisation exercise last year. According to it, we do not need the entire fleet of ambulances all the time. We need the full capacity only during morning hours. The absence of a few ambulances affects operations only during morning hours," he said.

However, he added that all the district hospitals were asked to redirect state ambulances available at the government hospitals to make up for any shortfall.

"Apart from the 108 ambulance fleet, the state has 800-900 other ambulances at government hospitals," Gupta said. "We have given standing instructions to all the district health officers to redirect these ambulances to the 108 ambulance fleet if need be. However, there are complaints that the measures have not been taken at a few places, causing inconvenience to the public. We will review the situation soon and take measures," Gupta said.

But a senior doctor with the emergency unit of a prominent hospital in Bengaluru countered the health department officials' claim that hospitals are most used in the morning. "The need for an ambulance could arise anytime. There is no morning or evening hours. The government must take all efforts to ensure no interruption in operation of the fleet. Hiring of drivers, maintenance and repairs must be completed on priority," the doctor, who wished to remain anonymous, told *DH*. Health officials said issues might have cropped up as the state health department is also taking over the operation of the 108 ambulance fleet, which is now under a private agency.

Once the ambulances come under the health department, monitoring and operations would improve significantly as the department will use technology to improve transparency and monitoring. "There will be a software which will help us monitor and the control room will be managed by us. We have conducted a trial in Chamarajanagar and it is promising," Gupta noted.

Murmu undertakes submarine sortie onboard INS Vaghsheer in Karwar

KARWAR (U-K DIST), DHNS

President Droupadi Murmu undertook a sortie onboard Indian Navy's indigenously-built frontline submarine INS Vaghsheer on the Western seaboard here on Sunday.

Murmu is the second President to undertake a submarine sortie. In February 2006, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam experienced a submarine sortie onboard INS Sindhu Rakshak.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi accompanied the President, who is also the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, during the sortie lasting over two hours in the Kalvari class submarine from the Karwar naval base, officials said.

The President, donning a naval uniform, waved at naval personnel before entering the submarine. She interacted with the crew of INS Vaghsheer and lauded their dedication, while describing the submarine as a shining example of the Navy's professional excellence and combat preparedness.

"President Droupadi Murmu undertook a dived sortie on the Western seaboard onboard INS Vaghsheer," the President's Secretariat said.

It said the President was briefed on the role of the submarine arm in India's maritime strategy, and operational capabilities as well as contributions in safeguarding national maritime interests.

Murmu, while interacting with the crew of INS Vaghsheer, commended their dedication, commitment and spirit of selfless service, it added.

"She said this indigenous submarine is a shining example of the Navy's professional excellence, combat preparedness and unwavering commitment to national security," the secretariat said on social media.

She landed in Karwar in a special navy helicopter at 9 am from Goa. The President was welcomed by Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot.

INS Vaghsheer was commissioned in January. It is one of the most silent and versatile diesel-electric submarines in the world, say Navy officials.

It is designed to undertake a wide range of missions, including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering and area surveillance.

Armed with wire-guided torpedoes, anti-ship missiles and advanced sonar systems, it also features modular construction, allowing future upgrades such as integration of Air Independent Propulsion technology.

In Oct, Murmu took a sortie in a Rafale fighter jet from the Indian Air Force Station in Ambala, becoming the first President of India to fly in two different fighter aircraft of IAF. She undertook a sortie in a Sukhoi 30 MKI in Apr 2023 from Tezpur in Assam.

President Droupadi Murmu waves to the staff of the Navy during a sortie onboard the INS Vaghsheer submarine at the Kadamba naval base in Karwar on Sunday.

VB-G RAM G not approved by Cabinet, decided by PMO: Siddu

Can't erase Mahatma's name from country's history: Shivakumar

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah claimed on Sunday that the BJP-led union government's decision to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rural and Ajeevika Mission Gramin (VB-G RAM G) Act "was not decided in the Cabinet".

"They are trying to erase Mahatma Gandhiji's name. No matter what they try, Mahatma Gandhiji's name is permanent. This scheme, started by Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi in 2005, is now being changed. It hasn't been decided in the Cabinet. It has been decided in the prime minister's office, even the concerned minister doesn't know", he said speaking at the Congress foundation day event.

The chief minister explained that the Congress Working Committee had decided on Saturday to begin a continuous movement from the gram panchayat level to the national level against the move from January 5.

He lamented that the VB—G RAM G Act had increased the financial burden on states, making it 60% for the union government and 40% for the state.

"The BJP is trying to ruin the rural economy. Dalits, OBCs minorities and women were benefiting (under MGNREGA). When there are no jobs, they should be given work. They are trying to destroy this scheme".

Slamming the move to replace MGNREGA, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said: "Is it possible to remove the name of Mahatma Gandhi from this country's history? It's impossible. Power is not permanent. How long will their party (BJP) be there? There must be an end. Is BJP permanent? Emperors like Alexander the Great are gone, Saddam Hussain had to hide".

Shivakumar said the 60:40 funding pattern under VB—G RAM G Act could not be implemented even by BJP-ruled states.

NGT notice for K'taka over diversion of KSPCB funds

NGT, from Page 1

"On the one hand, the PCBs are not allowed to fill vacancies to perform their tasks, which have increased multifold over the last few years. On the other hand, their funds are sought for works not covered by the Air Act or Water Act, the two laws that govern the PCBs."

A bench comprised of tribunal chairman Justice Prakash Shrivastava, expert members A Senthil Vel and Afroz Ahmad issued notice to 36 parties, including all the states and the Union territories. "The news item raises substantial issues relating to compliance with the environmental norms and implementation of the provisions of scheduled enactment," the order noted.

Conservation activity

Of the Rs 426 crore sought, Rs 300 crore was to fund construction of railway barricades to prevent man-elephant conflict.

The Rs 126 crore was meant for works for building coastal resilience under a climate change mitigation programme.

In its report, *DH* had also noted that diversion of KSPCB funds was not backed by laws, especially Water and Air Acts. In addition, the report pointed to the NGT order in 2023, which questioned the Punjab government's attempt to divert Rs 250 crore. Following the notice, Punjab made a U-turn and decided not to transfer the funds.

Within KSPCB, officials had said the board not only requires autonomy but also needs to incorporate measures to streamline the board. At least one official *DH* spoken to had expressed concern over the shortage of staff.

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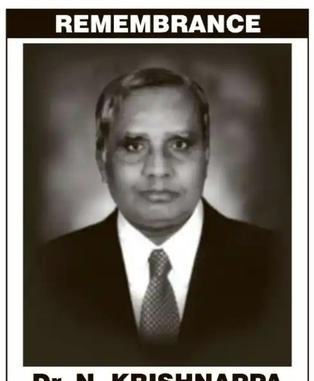
REMEMBRANCE



Dr. N. KRISHNAPPA
MBBS, MS (Ortho)
29-12-2008
Inserted by: FAMILY MEMBERS

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over the state.

Forecast Dec 29: Partly cloudy sky. Fog/Mist likely during early morning hours in some areas.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	29.0	11.0	0.0
Bidar	27.2	10.4	0.0
Vijayapura	27.6	9.6	0.0
Dharwad	27.0	11.0	0.0
Haveri	27.6	11.2	0.0
Kalaburagi	30.4	14.4	0.0
Raichur	28.2	11.8	0.0
COASTAL			
Honnavar	33.9	18.7	0.0
Karwar	34.4	19.4	0.0
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	31.9	21.0	0.0

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	NA	0.0
Bengaluru	26.7	15.9	0.0
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	--	--	--
Chikkamagaluru	--	--	--
Chitradurga	27.5	14.7	0.0
Davangere	29.5	12.0	0.0
Hassan	28.0	9.0	0.0
Mysuru	28.2	13.4	0.0
Madikeri	--	--	--
Kolar	27.2	14.6	0.0
OTHER STATIONS			
New Delhi	21.0	8.0	NIL
Kolkata	23.0	14.0	NIL
Mumbai	29.0	23.0	NA
Chennai	28.0	23.0	NA
Pune	27.0	14.0	NA
Hyderabad	28.0	11.0	NA
Th'puram	32.0	24.0	NIL

DARE & DUCK

A decorated bull charges towards the crowd during the year-end 'hori bedarisuva spardhe' event organised by youths at Shikaripur in Shivamogga district on Sunday. DH PHOTO/SHIVAMOGGA NAGARAJ

Gun-wielding men rob jewellery shop in Hunsur

HUNSUR (MYSURU DIST), DHNS

A gang of five gun-wielding men looted jewellery from a showroom in broad daylight on the bypass road of Hunsur town, on Sunday.

The incident occurred at the Sky gold and diamond jewellery shop in the town at 2 pm.

The four-minute robbery is recorded in the CCTV camera. Three of the bike-borne robbers were wearing helmets while two had masks on their faces.

Superintendent of Police N Vishnuvardhan said that according to the information available, two were holding guns in their both hands while the remaining had one each. "They did not took away silver and cash. They laid their hands only on gold chains which were easily accessible. They fired in the air to deter anyone from chasing them," he said.

The SP said that five teams had been constituted to nab the robbers. The value of jewellery robbed is yet to be estimated.

There are around 20 to 25 staff working in the shop. As it was Sunday, there were not many people around the place, locals said.

Fingerprint experts and a dog squad visited the spot.

Drug bust in B'luru; 17 ltrs of chemicals seized

Drug, from Page 1

The top police officer further said the seizure was the outcome of a joint operation by the Maharashtra ANTF and the Bengaluru City police. Senior officers from the Central Crime Branch (CCB) were part of the operation, and local police were present at the spots during the raids.

The police are trying to trace the owners of the buildings where the units operated.

According to ANTF officials, the chain of events leading to the raids began on December 21 when the Konkan unit of the ANTF conducted a raid in Navi Mumbai and arrested one Abdul Qadir Rashid Shaikh along with 1.488 kilograms of mephedrone worth Rs 1.48 crore. Further investigations led to the key accused, identified as Prashant Yallappa Patil, a resident of Belgaum, and to manufacturing of mephedrone at three units in Bengaluru.

An ANTF official said they arrested two suspects — Suraj Ramesh Yadav and Malkhan Ramlal Bishnoi — during the raids in Bengaluru. "Yadav and Bishnoi, both from Rajasthan, have confessed to preparing synthetic drugs at these units. Efforts are on to nab two more persons," the official said.

Bengaluru police officials said they would examine whether the accused had registered the units using forged documents or benami arrangements.

G PARAMESHWARA
Home Minister

"The racket came to light only after sustained interrogation of the accused arrested outside Karnataka, eventually leading the ANTF to Bengaluru. We conducted the raids in coordination with the Maharashtra police.

A senior officer told *DH* that a joint probe would now be initiated to trace local facilitators and identify any lapses.

Meanwhile, reacting to allegations that the Bengaluru police were caught unaware of the Maharashtra ANTF operation, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said the raids were a collective effort and should not be seen as a failure of the state police. The racket came to light only after sustained interrogation of the accused arrested outside Karnataka, eventually leading the ANTF to Bengaluru, he said.

"We conducted the raids in coordination with the Maharashtra police," he said.

At the same time, he warned that any negligence by the jurisdictional police would not be tolerated.

FIR against 4 officials for fabricating documents

▸ **BALLARI, DHNS:** An FIR has been filed against four officials of the Rural Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Department on the charge of fabricating documents to facilitate a contractor who had bid for a water work tender.

The department had invited tenders for works worth around Rs 18 lakh during 2020-21 to lay pipeline and provide connections to households. A contractor by name Moulali had participated in the tender. According to the FIR, the then executive engineer R Prabhu, accounts superintendent M Malathesh, second division assistant S Srikanta and assistant engineer M Surendranath had provided fake documents to Moulali so that he can get the contract. The contractor is the prime accused in the case.

DH Classifieds

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No.1, Seshadri Road, Bangalore – 560001
Ph.: 22214121/22215122
FOR THE NOTICE OF CENTURY CLUB MEMBERS
Special General Body meeting at 11.30 am will be held on Sunday, January 04, 2026 at the Club premises.
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Abishek Bogaram Arun Kumar
Hon. Secretary

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'Nothing to learn from RSS': Digvijaya faces pushback from Cong leaders

'Singh's unhappiness was over the way organisational revamp was designed in MP'

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh's nudge to the party to learn from the RSS saw a pushback from other leaders on Sunday with Pawan Khera and Manickam Tagore saying that there is nothing for the 140-year-old Congress to learn from a "divisive force" even as Shashi Tharoor backed the need for strengthening the party apparatus.

This comes amid reports that Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi told Singh after a party function here that "you did your job yesterday", an enigmatic remark that could be interpreted either way—a pat for raising concerns about the party or a sarcasm for seeking to draw parallels between the RSS and the Congress.

Later on Sunday, the veteran politician appeared to tone down his remarks, saying Rahul has initiated organisational revamp from district level and it will be taken to the grassroots. "It will be completed soon. There is a need to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots," he said while

Pawan Khera

deploring the BJP's "attempts to sow discord within Gandhi family".

The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister also said there are no differences within the party over ideology and the entire party is united.

Singh's two tweets in the last week and his remarks at the Congress Working Committee on Saturday on "over-centralisation" in the organisation have been interpreted by a section as a message to Rahul and a subtle sounding of the bugle against his trusted aide Congress General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal.

Some Congress leaders claimed that Singh's tweets bringing Rahul on the line of fire was due to his unhappiness over the way organisational revamp was designed in Madhya Pradesh. As one of the tweets cited how a grassroots leader Narendra Modi was promoted as the prime minister and suggested that the Congress should learn from the RSS on organisation, Congress Media and Publicity Department chairperson Pawan Khera said: "There is nothing to learn from the RSS. What can an organisation transformed by Mahatma Gandhi learn from RSS?"

Congress Lok Sabha Whip Manickam Tagore alleged the RSS is an organisation built on hatred and it spreads hatred. "Can you learn anything from Al Qaeda? Al Qaeda is an organisation of hatred. What is there to learn from that organisation?" he said.

Meanwhile, Tharoor, who is known for his stand-off with the leadership, appeared to support Singh by saying that there is a need to strengthen the organisation. However, he said, "we have a history of 140 years, and we can learn a lot from it. We can learn from ourselves, too. Discipline is very important in any party."

The BJP sought to fish in troubled waters with its spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla claiming that the Congress is now split into the Rahul faction and the Priyanka faction.

Dissent mounts against 'dictatorial' Bihar DyCM

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

Close on the heels of the Bihar Judicial Services' Association (BJSA) demanding an apology from Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sinha for his "deeply disturbing remarks" against a judge, Revenue Department officers have now joined the chorus of protest.

Members of the Bihar Revenue Service Association (BiRSA) have shot off a letter to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

In it, they have flagged the DyCM's misdemeanour, including the objectionable language he used and his style of functioning.

"The conduct and language used by the minister during his public hearing (janata durbar) have not only damaged the dignity of Revenue Department officials but also exposed them to public ridicule," said the letter signed by BiRSA president Anand Kumar and general secretary Saurabh Kumar.

The officers pointed to media and social media clips in which Sinha — who also holds the Revenue and Land Reforms portfolio — is apparently heard saying, "I will suspend you right here", "answer my question in front of the public", and "seek an explanation".

Father alleges racial slurs, brutal attack in Dehradun case

DEHRADUN, PTI: The father of Angel Chakma, a student from Tripura who died in Dehradun, has alleged that his son was "brutally attacked" with knives and blunt objects while trying to defend his brother, who was subjected to racial slurs and called "Chinese" by the assailants.

Tarun Chakma, a BSF jawan, alleged that police initially refused to register a report about the incident involving his sons in the Selakui area and an FIR was filed only two to three days later, after pressure from the All India Chakma Students Union and senior officers.

The attackers called his sons "Chinese momo" and other racial slurs, Tarun said. Angel told them that he "was also Indian, not Chinese", but they attacked him with knives and blunt objects, he said.

Angel, an MBA student at a private university in Dehradun, died on Friday after battling for his life for 17 days in the hospital.

Police said Angel had allegedly sustained injuries to his head and back from a sharp object and a kadaa (bracelet) following a quarrel with five to six people at a canteen on December 9.

Bengal: Humayun Kabir's son held for assaulting policeman

KOLKATA, PTI: Janata Unnayan Party (JUP) chief Humayun Kabir's son Golam Nabi Azad was on Sunday detained for allegedly attacking a policeman posted at their residence in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, an officer said.

A senior police officer said Azad, better known as Sohel, was detained on the basis of a complaint lodged with Shaktipur police station by Constable Jumma Khan.

Khan alleged that the Bharatpur legislator's son assaulted him on Sunday morning when he applied for a few days' leave.

UP voter list may see 2.89 cr deletions

Draft roll after SIR to be published on Dec 31

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

As many as 2.89 crore names are likely to be deleted from the voter list in Uttar Pradesh, where the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise concluded on Friday, according to Election Commission (EC) officials.

The draft electoral roll will be published on December 31. The pre-SIR list, which contained 15.44 crore names, could be reduced to 12.55 crore after the deletions, officials said.

People whose names have been deleted may file objections by January 30, and their names could be included upon submission of the necessary documents. The final electoral roll will be published on February 28.

Officials said the maximum number of deletions (12 lakh names) was recorded in Lucknow, followed by Prayagraj (11 lakh) and Kanpur (9 lakh).

The electoral rolls in Agra and Ghaziabad also saw the exclusion of around eight lakh names, sources said.

According to officials, the deletions were due to a variety of factors, including migration, duplicate entries, deaths and missing voters. They said that migration accounted for the largest share of deletions.

People have been asked to file objections after the publication of the draft electoral roll.

Officials said that 9.81% of names were in the 'unmapped' category. These voters will be sent notices by the EC to submit the necessary documents to confirm their identity, after which they will be moved to the 'mapped' category.

The exercise has drawn sharp criticism from Opposition parties, which alleged that it was aimed at deleting the names of their supporters and benefiting the BJP.

The BJP rejected the allegations, claiming that only the names of illegal migrants were being deleted.

List revision

As per officials, Lucknow tops voter deletions

Nearly 10% voters in 'unmapped' category

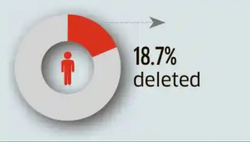
Opposition accuses BJP of targeting supporters

Saffron party cites illegal migrants

Big numbers

12.55 cr voters draft electoral roll size | 2.89 cr names deleted

15.44 crore pre-SIR voter list



Another BLO found dead in Bengal; work pressure alleged

KOLKATA, PTI: A Booth Level Officer (BLO) was found dead in West Bengal's Bankura district on Sunday, triggering allegations that work-related pressure linked to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls may have played a role, police said.

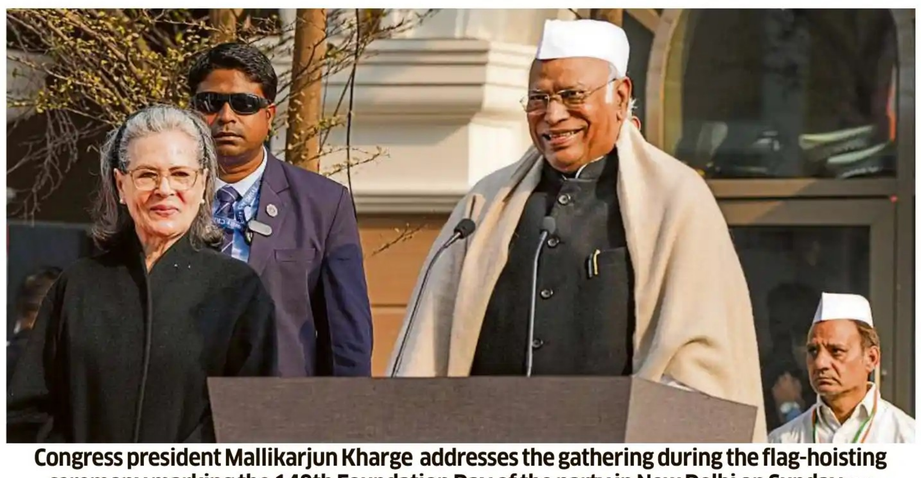
The incident occurred in Ranibandh block, where the body of the deceased, Haradhan Mandal, was recovered from a school premises on Sunday morning. The police said they also found a "suicide note".

Accusing the BJP of 'bulldozing' the SIR process, TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee alleged that over 50 lives have been lost "to panic, anxiety, exhaustion and fear engineered by a voter-cleansing operation designed for the BJP's electoral gain".

"Mandal was a school-teacher by profession and served as the BLO of Booth No. 206 under the Rajakata area of Ranibandh block," a police officer said.

According to the officer, a note bearing the deceased's signature was recovered from the spot, in which he reportedly referred to being unable to cope with work pressure as a BLO. "We have seized the note and sent the body for post-mortem examination," he said.

The police initiated probe to ascertain the circumstances leading to his death.


Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addresses the gathering during the flag-hoisting ceremony marking the 140th Foundation Day of the party in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Congress not finished, 'spine still straight': Kharge

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Asking party workers to unite with the spirit of the "Dandi March" and the "Quit India" movement to save the MGNREGA, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday targeted the ruling BJP, claiming those whose ancestors played no role in the freedom movement were now engaged in snatching away people's rights.

Addressing a gathering on the Congress' 140th Foundation Day, he said those thinking the party was "finished" must know that "our spine is still straight".

Insisting that the Congress had not compromised with the Constitution, secularism, and the rights of the poor, he said, "We may not be in power, but we will not bargain. The Congress has never sought votes in the name of religion..., never spread hatred between temples and mosques. The Congress unites. The BJP divides. The Congress kept religion as faith, but some people turned religion into politics."

He added: "Over the past 11 years, the BJP government has amended several laws to benefit a handful of capitalists. The MGNREGA has been destroyed, and the plunder of water, forests, and land continues. The government is playing with fake data, and to hide the truth, the Census has still not been conducted."

Recalling that Mahatma Gandhi prepared the Congress to work on issues such as social reform, opposition to untouchability, economic self-reliance, equal rights, and resistance to communalism, he said the party's vision had always been expansive.

However, he said, national wealth, water, forests, and land were "under threat in the Modi regime", which has weakened institutions the Congress built.

He also said the framework of fundamental rights the Congress prepared in 1931 became part of the Constitution, but it and democracy were under threat today.

"RSS–BJP leaders did not accept the Constitution, the Tricolour, the Ashoka Chakra, or even Vande Mataram. They opposed laws meant for social progress and are intent on crushing the rights of the people earned through sacrifice and struggle," he said a day after his party decided to launch the "MGNREGA Bachao Abhiyan" from January 5 next year.

He asked Congress workers across the country to unite and go among the people to save the MGNREGA. "We will compel the government to restore MGNREGA in the interest of the poor, vulnerable," he said.

UP minister prescribes 'stick therapy' for alcoholics

LUCKNOW, DHNS: People addicted to alcohol are usually sent to rehabilitation centres for treatment, but an Uttar Pradesh minister has prescribed an altogether different line of therapy.

He advised women to hit their husbands with sticks if they did not give up drinking. Further, the Labour and Employment Minister Manohar Lal Panth said, "I was addicted to alcohol. Once, when I returned home in an inebriated condition, my wife hit me with sticks. I stopped drinking after that."

Mamata to build Durga temple in Kolkata months after Jagannath shrine

KOLKATA, DHNS: In another move to blunt the BJP's Hindutva push ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will lay the foundation of a temple of Goddess Durga in Kolkata on Monday, amid the saffron party accusing the Trinamool Congress supremo of succumbing to pressure from Muslims to change its venue.

The polls are expected in April-May 2026.

Banerjee is expected to lay the foundation of the "Durga Angan" in New Town in Kolkata, just eight months after she inaugurated a grandiose temple of Lord Jagannath in the coastal town of Digha.

Mamata Banerjee

The state government will reportedly spend approximately Rs 262 crore to build the Durga temple on a 17-acre plot. It had spent Rs 250 crore on the Jagannath, built on approximately 24 acres of land.

The "Durga Angan" will, however, be built as a place of regular worship of Goddess Durga, said state government officials.

The chief minister also recently promised to build a temple of Mahakal (Lord Shiva) in Siliguri, apparently, to take the fizz out of the BJP's Hindutva campaign and its allegation that the Trinamool government in West Bengal was pursuing a policy of Muslim appeasement.

The Durga Angan move comes amid the BJP accusing her party of opposing the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal to protect its vote bank of illegal Muslim immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh.

The BJP alleges that the TMC has been helping these illegal Muslim migrants settle down in Bengal, and thus changing the demographic profile of the state's border districts, posing a threat to the Hindus.

It sought to lend credence to its allegation by highlighting suspended TMC legislator Humayun Kabir's efforts to build a "Babri Mosque" in Murshidabad.

BJP reaction

Bengal BJP heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari said the Constitution did not allow the construction of any place of worship with government money received from taxpayers. He also said that when Hindus would need a place of worship, they would build it with donations from within the community, as had been done with the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Members of various organisations hold a protest seeking justice for the Unnao rape case survivor in New Delhi. PTI

Unnao rape survivor, family protest at Jantar Mantar

NEW DELHI, PTI: The survivor of the 2017 Unnao rape case, along with her family and activists, held a protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on Sunday against the suspension of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar's life sentence by the Delhi High Court in the case.

Demanding stricter accountability from authorities, the survivor, who was present during the protest, said that their family should be provided with more security.

"I'm requesting the chief minister to provide us security; these people are powerful. Please save your daughter," she said. " My husband was expelled from his job, we are unemployed, where will we go?" she said.

The demonstrators raised slogans against what they described as undue leniency towards the convict Sengar, arguing that the action taken so far fell short of public expectations.

"We were beaten up, our relatives were beaten up, fake cases were registered against our relatives; I request the government not to release him," she said.

The Supreme Court is slated to hear on Monday a plea by the CBI challenging the Delhi High Court order.

Open merit students call off Kashmir quota protest amid clampdown

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

RESERVATION ROW

- Protest called off after leaders backing students placed under house arrest
- NC MP Ruhullah, PDP leaders Iltija Mufti and Waheed Parra detained to block participation
- Ruhullah alleges police pressure on parents and hostel confinement of students
- Cabinet panel recommends 50% seats each for open merit and reserved categories

Students from the open merit category in Kashmir on Sunday called off a proposed sit-in protest in Srinagar against what they termed an "unfair reservation", citing an adverse security situation and alleged preventive action by the authorities.

The sit-in, scheduled to be held on Gupkar Road, was cancelled after several political leaders who had publicly supported the students' cause were allegedly placed under house arrest, while a number of student leaders were reportedly prevented from joining the demonstration.

Officials said National Conference (NC) Member of Parliament Aga Syed Ruhullah, People's Democratic Party (PDP) leaders Iltija Mufti and Waheed-ur-Rehmaan Parra, and former Srinagar mayor Junaid Mattoo were placed under house detention to prevent them from participating in the protest.

Ruhullah alleged that the police had summoned parents of some students to police stations and asked students to present themselves before their parents were allowed to leave. He claimed that some students were confined to their hostels, with wardens allegedly instructed not to allow them to step out.

"On whose directions were these students detained?" Ruhullah asked, adding that he hoped clarity would emerge on whether the actions were taken on the directions of the elected government or the Lieutenant Governor's administration.

The Cabinet sub-committee has recommended 50% seats each for the open merit and reserved categories. While the Cabinet has left most of the reserved quota untouched, it has recommended slashing seats under the Residents of Backward Areas and Economically Weaker Section, and shifting them to the open merit quota.

The Open Merit Students Association J&K, one of the groups spearheading the agitation, said the sit-in was cancelled due to "circumstances beyond our control".

PDP leader Waheed-ur-Rehmaan Parra accused the Omar Abdullah government of showing no intent to address the issue.

Farooq Abdullah defending house arrest exposes rift within NC

SRINAGAR, DHNS: National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah's defence of the house arrest of party MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi and other leaders on Sunday has brought simmering dissent within Jammu and Kashmir's ruling outfit into the open.

It also underlined a growing confrontation between the Abdullahs and one of the NC's most vocal parliamentarians. Abdullah told reporters at Pahalgam that the leaders placed under house arrest wanted to create "turmoil", and suggested that they were unhappy with J&K's "progress".

"You should ask those leaders what they want to do. We are doing as much as we can. Perhaps they do not like that the state is progressing. They want turmoil, which we will not allow," he said.

The remarks came against the backdrop of Ruhullah, a sitting NC MP, openly challenging the party leadership over its handling of the reservation issue and its response to student protests.

Sharad Pawar praises Adani, sending ripples in I.N.D.I.A bloc

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani with NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar during an event in Baramati. PTI

In a development that could further strain equations within the Congress-led I.N.D.I.A Opposition bloc, NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar on Sunday lavished praise on Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani.

Pawar described Adani's rise as an "inspiration", with the industrialist reciprocating by calling the veteran leader a "mentor". The warm exchange assumes political significance as the Congress continues its aggressive attacks on Adani, led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Though the event was officially non-political, it has generated considerable buzz in the state amid renewed speculation over a possible rapprochement between the two factions of the NCP.

Adani was in Baramati, the Pawar family bastion in Pune district, to inaugurate the new complex of the Sharad Pawar Centre for Excellence in Artificial Intelligence, part of the Vidya Pratishthan established by Pawar.

In his address, Pawar highlighted Adani's journey from Gujarat's drought-prone Banaskantha district to building a vast business empire across 23 states. "Adani arrived in Mumbai and started from scratch. Today, his journey is an inspiration for hardworking youth who dream big," he said.

Adani, in turn, said his association with Pawar, which spans nearly three decades, had shaped his thinking. "What I have learned from Sharad Pawar has no parallel. Beyond knowledge, it is his wisdom and empathy that leave the strongest imprint. He has always been a mentor in the truest sense," he said.

DECCAN HERALD
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Bilateral progress amid tariff worries

The trade agreement with New Zealand, concluded last week, is yet another strategic landmark for India in the recent past. Because of the collapse of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations and the tariff war unleashed by US President Donald Trump, countries are increasingly going in for bilateral trade deals. Bilateralism has emerged as the preferred mode of trade for India, too. It has concluded three trade deals this year —with the UK, Oman, and now with New Zealand. Bilateral agreements are in place with the UAE and Australia, and negotiations are in progress on deals with the US, the European Union (EU), and other countries. India has an advantage with most countries because of the large size of its economy and its high growth rate. It provides a large and attractive market set to grow bigger in the coming years.

Under the latest agreement, all Indian exports will be accorded duty-free access by New Zealand. An important area of engagement between the two countries is services. India's interests in areas such as IT services, education, and financial services will be protected, and a new facility for Temporary Employment Entry Visas will facilitate openings for skilled employment. The agreement will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95% of New Zealand's exports to India, with more than half the products being duty-free from the beginning. India has sought to exclude dairy and the agricultural sector because it wants to protect the interests of its farmers. The agreement also deals with non-tariff barriers "through enhanced regulatory cooperation, transparency, and streamlined customs, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures". The two countries have agreed to deepen their investment relationship, with New Zealand agreeing to facilitate investments of 20 billion dollars into India in the next 15 years.

India's trade deal with New Zealand opens a strategic door

A trade deal, like any international agreement, involves give and take. New Zealand has removed some restrictions on the entry of Indian students, and will offer jobs in skilled occupations with 5,000 three-year visas annually. There is some opposition to the deal in New Zealand with respect to some key provisions. While Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has welcomed the deal, Foreign Minister Winston Peters, a coalition partner in his government, has opposed it. Peters has said that it has given too much away, especially on immigration and dairy. Opposition leader Chris Hipkins has reservations about some provisions. In India, there is some worry in apple-growing states over the slashing of duty on imports from New Zealand. No bilateral agreement will satisfy all sections, and the India-New Zealand deal demonstrates that.

Another significant milestone for ISRO

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) set yet another record last week by launching its heaviest ever satellite aboard Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3) into a low earth orbit. The satellite is functioning normally. It is a US satellite weighing nearly 6,100 kg, and with its successful launch, ISRO has shown that it can undertake the most complex and sophisticated scientific and engineering feats at the lowest cost. It is ISRO's third commercial mission involving the new launch vehicle. It has confirmed that India has established itself as an important space power, with its mastery of heavy-lift launch capabilities, essential for deep-space exploration and human spaceflight. ISRO has till now launched as many as 434 foreign satellites belonging to 34 countries. It has steadily improved its capabilities through these launches to establish its position as a credible space power.

It has been a year of steady progress and achievements for ISRO. In January, it successfully accomplished its SPADEX mission which involved docking and undocking of two satellites in space. The capability is essential for its future missions, including the lunar landing programme and the building of a space station of its own. The next important enterprise was the NISAR mission, a joint India-US space mission, undertaken in July. It produced the most detailed images of earth ever captured from space. The LVM3-M5 mission in November placed in orbit the 4,400-kg CMS-03 satellite, till then the heaviest payload to be launched. With three launches of very heavy satellites into the low-earth orbit and the geosynchronous orbit, ISRO looks forward to further refining its technological capabilities.

India has now established its mastery of heavy-lift capabilities

Describing the LVM3 mission as successful, ISRO chairman V Narayanan has revealed the organisation's agenda for the next few months. Next year will see the launch of the uncrewed Gaganyaan programme, which will mark a new frontier in space exploration. ISRO is planning at least six more launches before March next year. A major technology demonstration mission is on the anvil to showcase about 30 important homegrown technologies. The LVM3 launchers are designed for heavier payloads in future. With an environment that encourages private sector participation in space programmes, start-ups are active in the area. Skyroot aerospace, which was behind the country's first private rocket launch, has planned the maiden launch of its Vikram-1 rocket in the coming months. The ISRO chief also said that the LVM3 mission marked an important step in India's progress to realise its human spaceflight ambitions. It also shows that the country is on course to achieve its aim of securing 10 per cent of the global space business by 2033.

R&D GOVERNANCE

Can ANRF deliver?

If it wants to kick-start innovation, the Anusandhan National Research Foundation should function on the lines of DARPA and not become just another funding mechanism

ARINDAM GOSWAMI

There's a story researchers in India's government labs tell with a rueful smile. A scientist receives a grant to build a prototype of an advanced agricultural sensor.

By the time procurement approves equipment, vendors quote, purchase orders clear seven approval layers, equipment clears customs and installation completes, 18 months pass. The cutting-edge technology is now on Amazon. The scientist publishes a paper. The prototype gathers dust. Everyone ticks boxes showing the grant was "successfully utilised". This is how India does research funding.

Now comes the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), with Rs 50,000 crore and sky-high ambitions. The Prime Minister chairs its governing board. The comparisons to the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the US are explicit. But what makes anyone think ANRF will differ from the alphabet soup of research bodies—CSIR, DRDO, DBT, DST, SERB—that already exist?

India has, of course, impressive achievements. ISRO's cost-effective satellites, DRDO's strategic missiles, and vaccine manufacturing during Covid are some of the incredible examples. But R&D spending has been hovering around 0.7% of the GDP for two decades. A CAG audit found that 119 of 178 DRDO high-priority projects had missed deadlines.

The Kaveri engine programme, which started in the 1990s, consumed massive resources and failed to produce a working engine. The Tejas aircraft finally flew with American engines.

ANRF's composition is top-heavy with bureaucrats and politicians; it lacks experienced scientists and industry experts at operational levels. That's why DARPA works — its 100-odd programme managers, on temporary assignment from academia and industry, have authority to make speedy decisions and kill failing projects without elaborate justification.

The DARPA model rests on three pillars opposite to Indian bureaucratic DNA: 1) extreme authority concentration in individual programme managers; 2) explicit celebration of failure as information; and 3) freedom from standard government rules. India has none of this institutionalised.

Consider the procurement problem. When DARPA needed autonomous vehicles, it announced the 2004 Grand Challenge — drive a robot car 150 miles through the Mojave Desert, with the winner pocketing $1 million. Every vehicle failed; the farthest got 7.4 miles before hitting a rock. In any Indian programme, this would trigger inquiries about wasteful expenditure.

DARPA refined the course and ran it again in 2005. Five vehicles finished. That event seeded the entire autonomous vehicle industry - Google's self-driving cars, Tesla's Autopilot, hundreds of billions in investment. The willingness to watch everything fail in year one and double down in year two is what breakthrough innovation looks like. It's also what Indian audit mechanisms are

designed to prevent.

Now, imagine an ANRF programme manager trying this approach. She identifies a critical problem. She wants to fund three competing teams. The traditional process requires publishing detailed RFPs, waiting for applications, constituting expert committees, scoring on pre-defined criteria, and defending selections. This takes a year at the minimum. But by then, the startup has pivoted, the professor moved institutions, and the company won a Singapore contract.

At DARPA, the programme manager calls the startup and says: "I have $2 million if you demonstrate a prototype in eighteen months." The contract gets signed in weeks. No RFP, no committee, no competition. The programme manager's judgment is trusted.

The UK's Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) has been brutally honest about this. ARIA programme managers operate with exemption from public procurement regulations–a technical detail that actually allows moving from idea to funded project in weeks rather than months.

For ANRF to get similar authority requires political will. The Ministry of Finance will resist exemptions from financial rules. The Central Vigilance Commission will worry about discretionary spending. Opposition parties will demand competitive bidding. Every concern is legitimate. And every one, if allowed to override the mission, turns ANRF into just another funding body.

India produces more STEM graduates than any country except China, yet has roughly 250 researchers per million people against 4,800 in the US and 5,400 in Germany. Indians run research departments at American universities, lead labs at Google and Microsoft, win Nobel Prizes after leaving. The problem is that research in India isn't structured as an attractive career.

ANRF could change this by making programme manager a prestigious, well-compensated role - Rs 100 crore and three years to chase something important with complete autonomy. Let them hire globally, pay market rates, and offer equity participation. It means breaking government salary structures. Questions would be raised in Parliament, but it would be worth it.

Failure tolerance will encounter intense cultural resistance. Indian public life runs on negative accountability, in which fear of blame vastly exceeds reward for success. DARPA operates on the principle that if every project succeeds, the portfolio isn't ambitious enough.

Therefore, to bring about any worthwhile change, ANRF requires statutory protection: "no civil or criminal proceedings shall lie against any programme manager for decisions made in good faith in furtherance of the Foundation's objectives." Without this, the first spectacular failure will teach every programme manager to fund safe things.

DARPA doesn't operate through existing infrastructure; it finds the best people and ideas wherever they exist and funds directly. ANRF needs similar latitude. This will create resistance.

CSIR labs getting Rs 50 crore annually will surely have a problem with ANRF giving Rs 100 crore to startups. State governments will demand their respective shares. These are pressures that will pull toward redistribution rather than capability creation, which will need to be resisted.

If ANRF identifies five or six critical challenges — energy independence, water purification, advanced manufacturing — and organises programmes around those, it could matter. For instance, breakthroughs in grid-scale storage or ultra-low-cost solar could be transformative. These are moonshot-scale problems where failure is likely but success would matter enormously.

The alternative is clear. ANRF becomes another funding mechanism issuing calls for proposals, counting success in publications, and producing research that changes nothing fundamental. A decade later, people wonder why India's R&D hasn't transformed despite investment.

If ANRF starts radically and survives inevitable criticism when early programmes fail, it might become what India's innovation ecosystem desperately needs.

(The writer is a research analyst in the High-Tech Geopolitics Programme at the Takshashila Institution)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

'Para' by any other name

A suffix can change everything

SHYAMALA MANI IYER

This is the season for dictionaries to proclaim new words. Merriam-Webster has just declared 'Slop' as the new word for 2025, while Collins Dictionary has declared 'vibe coding' as the new word for the year. Well, Cambridge Dictionary's word of the year was 'parasocial', meaning a one-sided psychological bond where a person feels they know and have a relationship with a media figure – a celebrity or fictional character – who is unaware of their existence, creating an intimacy through media like television, social media, etc.

I was thinking about how prefixes can change the meaning of a word. Take 'para', for example. We have just seen what 'para' does to social – reducing one associated with society to one forming a one-sided bond. A person who is paranoid is entirely different from a 'paragon' of virtue. One suffers from delusions of persecution or grandeur, while the other describes someone or something that is a perfect embodiment of a concept or behaviour. A paraplegic person is one for whom we might want to help if we could, while a parasite is a person we would rather shun.

In the English language, a paradox is different from a paradoxical statement. One means a statement that contradicts itself, while the other means that something is seemingly contradictory but nonetheless possibly true. When you write a paragraph on a subject, it is usually one of several subdivisions of a longer text, but when you paraphrase something, you put into your own words something you have just read or heard, in a shorter version. A parody is a humorous imitation of more serious writing or music, while a parable is a short story that usually illustrates a moral or lesson.

'Paradigm shift' is a commonly used phrase while talking about new shifts in policy issues both in the government and in the corporate sector. 'Parochial' would refer to a narrow-minded outlook on issues and situations.

When it comes to professions, a paramedic is a person trained to give emergency medical treatment, while a paralegal is a person with specialised training to assist lawyers, and paramilitary is an unofficial military unit.

'Parasailing' refers to a sport in which a person is harnessed to a parachute-like device being pulled by a vehicle. 'Paragliding' is another sport where a person is harnessed to a manoeuvrable parachute-like wing. While both these are for the sporty kind, a paratrooper is someone who specialises in parachuting from an aircraft, sometimes behind enemy lines, often compromising his life.

The world of the 'para' could go on and on, as would other prefixes like 'anti' and 'un'. So, in the future, never ever cock a snook at a prefix because a wrong prefix could change what you set out to say!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pause VB-G Ram G and restore demand-based employment

I refer to 'Will need Rs 20,000 crore in five years for new rural job scheme: Karnataka' (Dec 28). Replacing MGNREGA with the VB-G RAM G Act is a retrograde step that calls for immediate course correction. By forcing states to fund 40% of the scheme without prior consultation, the Union government has offloaded a substantial fiscal burden -- an approach that weakens cooperative federalism and strains state finances. MGNREGA was a proven, rights-based and demand-driven programme that guaranteed employment, empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions, and strengthened rural livelihoods. The Union government should pause implementation of VB-G ram G, consult states and experts, restore demand-driven employment, and redesign the funding framework before lasting damage is done.

K V Chandramouli, Mysuru

Dowry's deadly shadow

Apropos 'Days after wife's suicide in Bengaluru, man hangs self in Nagpur' (Dec 28), while reports of dowry-linked suicides document the tragic sequence of events, they often overlook the failure of timely mental-health and counselling support for distressed couples. Little attention is paid to whether early warning signs were noticed or if preventive intervention mechanisms were available. The continued social acceptance of dowry, despite strict laws, also remains insufficiently questioned. Equally missing is a discussion on the emotional impact of delayed legal processes on grieving families. Media focus must expand beyond tragedy to emphasise prevention, and accountability.

Umme Haani, Bengaluru

Use tech

I refer to 'Elephant deaths call for new safety approach' (Dec 25). The death of elephants on rail tracks is a wake-up call to protect species through technology-based solutions. Development should not come at the cost of animal life and natural environments. Real-time monitoring, policies, and outreach efforts are crucial for coexistence between humans and wildlife.

Swetha G, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Remote-controlled Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was trying to explain the party's achievements... PoK, Partition and 1984 riots are the legacy of the Congress. Giving our land to China is the legacy of the Congress.

Gaurav Bhatia, BJP spokesperson

Any one who thinks he is holier than the rest deludes himself.

Bangambiki Habyarimana

TO BE PRECISE

Bengaluru demolition drive, families evicted

IN PERSPECTIVE

Policing begins with high morale

Humane working conditions are central to rebuilding trust and improving performance in the force

GOPAL HOSUR

In any modern, democratic society, policing is the most visible expression of the State's commitment to order, justice and the rule of law.

For a progressive state like Karnataka—home to global technology hubs, major industrial corridors, vibrant civil society institutions and deep social diversity—effective policing is not merely a law-and-order function. It is an essential enabler of economic growth, social harmony and individual freedom.

The confidence of citizens, investors and institutions rests significantly on the credibility, accessibility and professionalism of the police. Where policing is fair, responsive and efficient, trust in governance deepens. Where it falters, insecurity seeps into everyday life. Strengthening the police, therefore, is not an administrative choice but a democratic imperative, vital to safeguarding both public order and aspirations of a rapidly transforming society.

As Karnataka enters the New Year, the police organisation stands at a moment that demands clarity of purpose rather than incremental adjustment. The challenges before it – rapid urbanisation, technology-enabled crime, rising public expectations and intense scrutiny of police conduct – cannot be met through routine measures. What is required is a focused agenda anchored in morale, structure, technology and learning from best practices.

Police morale is the single most important, yet least discussed, determinant of performance. National studies on policing in India consistently show that constables routinely work 10 to 14 hours a day, often without assured weekly days off, predictable leave or institutional psychological support. Chronic fatigue, stress and declining job satisfaction are common features of police life.

Karnataka mirrors this national reality. Persistent vacancies at the cutting edge have resulted in overstretched existing manpower. Women constitute less than 9% of the force, limiting diversity and compounding deployment pressures.

Welfare infrastructure – housing, healthcare, counselling and recreation – has not expanded in proportion to growing demands placed on the police.

A police force that is physically exhausted and mentally stressed cannot be expected to deliver professional, empathetic and law-bound policing. Instead, it risks knee-jerk responses. The New Year agenda must therefore prioritise regulated duty hours, assured weekly days off, institutionalised counselling, fitness programmes and transparent career progression. Morale is not a welfare concession; it is an operational necessity.

Equally critical is the question of police geography. Many stations in Karnataka, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas, serve populations far beyond optimal limits. Oversized and overlapping jurisdictions dilute supervision, delay response times and weaken accountability.

Globally, modern policing systems rely on periodic rationalisation of police unit boundaries using population density, crime incidence and response-time data. Evidence from international policing studies shows that data-driven restructuring of patrol beats reduces workload imbalance and significantly improves emergency response.

Karnataka must institutionalise regular boundary rationalisation, especially in Bengaluru and fast-growing district headquarters. Smaller, clearly defined jurisdictions improve citizen access, enhance local intelligence and strengthen supervisory control without necessarily increasing manpower. It is time the unwieldy Bengaluru city police commissionerate is trifurcated and large districts such as Belagavi are bifurcated.

Technology is no longer optional in policing. India has already created a strong base through the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems, integrating thousands of police stations into a common digital platform. Several states have moved beyond adoption to effective integration.

Telangana's integrated command and control centre enables real-time coordination across police, traffic, disaster management and civic agencies. Maharashtra's AI-driven MARVEL platform supports crime analytics, digital evidence management and predictive policing.

Karnataka must accelerate universal deployment of body-worn cameras, real-time crime mapping, mobile access to criminal databases for field officers and robust citizen-facing digital platforms. However, technology must be accompanied by continuous training and strict data-privacy safeguards. Poorly understood technology weakens policing; well-integrated systems enhance it.

Comparative experience offers valuable guidance. Japan's *kōban* system demonstrates how small, community-embedded police posts build trust and deterrence simultaneously. The UK's Project Servator shows how visible policing combined with citizen engagement reassures the public without militarising public spaces.

Closer home, controlled evaluations in Rajasthan established that better training, autonomy and supervision produce measurable improvements in police performance and public perception. Institutional design matters as much as resources.

Public safety is not merely the absence of crime; it is the presence of trust, professionalism and responsiveness.

(The writer is a retired IPS officer in Karnataka)

Beyond yields: Odisha's path to climate-smart and regenerative farming

INDU K MURTHY AND ARABINDA KUMAR PADHEE

Among India's most climate-exposed regions, Odisha stands out for both its agricultural heritage and acute vulnerability. More than half its land area is exposed to cyclones, droughts, floods and extreme heat, with climate hazards recorded in 41 of the past 50 years. Nearly two-thirds of the state's cropped area is rainfed, making agriculture highly sensitive to monsoon variability. While coastal districts face cyclones and flooding, interior regions contend with recurring droughts and intensifying heatwaves. These pressures have depressed yields, heightened food insecurity and pushed farmers into distress, compounded by a long-standing dependence on water-intensive paddy cultivation.

Yet Odisha's response marks a clear shift from vulnerability to leadership. In recent years, the state has placed climate action at the centre of its agricultural reforms, prioritising climate-smart and regenerative practices. By restoring soil health, diversifying crops, improving water management, and enhancing farmer incomes, Odisha is protecting livelihoods while offering a compelling model of climate-smart development.

The future of food is increasingly understood as regenerative—an approach that restores soils, revives biodiversity, reduces emissions, and builds resilience while sustaining productivity and livelihoods. Odisha was ahead of the curve, embracing this shift well before it gained global traction.

The Shree Anna Abhiyan, formerly the Odisha Millet Mission (2017), revived climate-resilient grains in rainfed areas. Millets improved soil organic matter, reduced reliance on water-intensive crops, enhanced nutrition, and raised incomes in tribal regions. Building on this success, the Revival and Sustainable Intensification of Forgotten Foods and Neglected Crops (2025) is reintroducing indigenous pulses, legumes, tubers, and traditional cereals.

Soil restoration has been equally central to the state's strategy. Regenerative soil management programmes such as SAFAR—which uses basic slag (a by-product of basic steel-making) and fly ash to reclaim acid soils—and ICAR–NRRI's enhanced biofertiliser and bioinoculant production programme (2023) are reducing dependence on chemical inputs while improving soil carbon and nutrient cycling.

Water systems, too, are being rebuilt to withstand climate extremes. Low-energy, gravity-fed irrigation systems in tribal regions; decentralised water harvesting under Jaladhara (2024) and Farm Pond Plus (2017); and expanded micro-irrigation under the 'Per Drop More Crop' component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana are strengthening climate-resilient water access while lowering energy demand.

Odisha is also regenerating landscapes by bringing fallow land back into production. The Comprehensive Rice Fallow Management scheme (2023) enables farmers to grow post-monsoon pulses and oilseeds, improving soil moisture use and boosting incomes. Complementing this, the Special Programme for Promotion of Integrated Farming in Tribal Areas links crops, horticulture, fisheries, livestock, and on-farm composting to circular, diversified livelihoods.

On the rural circular bioeconomy front, the state is converting water hyacinth and agricultural residues into valuable inputs such as compost and biochar and embedding decentralised composting within the broader waste-to-wealth initiative. Together, these efforts lower emissions, enhance soil carbon, and generate green livelihoods.

The most forward-looking step is the Carbon Standards for Incentivising Farmers for Regenerative Agricultural Practices. By building transparent monitoring, reporting, and verification systems for soil carbon and other ecosystem services, Odisha is preparing its farmers for the emerging carbon finance landscape.

What stands out is that regenerative agriculture in Odisha is not an isolated programme. It is deeply embedded within the state's broader climate-smart and climate-resilient agriculture framework.

Odisha's experience shows that climate action and agricultural development can reinforce each other. Sustaining and scaling this progress, however, will require steady investment in farmer-centric extension, innovation, and training, alongside robust climate risk management, with crop insurance and early warning systems as critical safeguards.

Comprehensive monitoring will also be essential. Tracking agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, changes in soil carbon, gains in agro-biodiversity, and improvements in water-use efficiency will help sustain the momentum. Empowering the Climate Resilience Cell and institutionalising regeneration metrics within the Viksit Odisha 2036 and 2047 vision will enable targeted resource allocation for maximum impact.

As food systems gain prominence in climate strategies, Odisha offers a credible blueprint for aligning sustainability with livelihood security in the tropics. With global climate finance evolving and nature-based solutions gaining ground, Odisha is uniquely positioned to translate international ambition into locally grounded action. By deepening innovation, strengthening institutions, and empowering farmers as stewards of land and climate, Odisha can continue to lead and inspire others. Its proactive stance gives it a clear edge over states that are still seeking viable resilience strategies.

(Indu heads the Climate, Environment and Sustainability sector at the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP); Arabinda is Principal Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment (DA&FE), Government of Odisha)

Indonesia is building a new, green city in the jungle. Its future is far from certain, but new residents like living there, far from the madding crowd

The lure of a rising Asian metropolis? No traffic

SUI-LEE WEE

A five-lane road near an area with government buildings in Nusantara. NYT

In a remote corner of the island of Borneo on a recent Monday, a runner breezed down the middle of a freshly paved six-lane road. There was no traffic. Nearby, a gigantic eagle-like bird, made of thousands of copper bars, was perched on a hill.

This is the heart of Nusantara, a new, green metropolis rising from scratch from a forest in Indonesia.

But three years after officials broke ground on the city, the prospects of what was billed as Indonesia's future capital are cloudy. Only a fraction of civil servants who were expected to move in have done so. The future of the water supply is in doubt. Residents still have to commute for hours to go to a mall or a movie. Many Indonesians now call it a ghost city.

Still, tourists regularly visit Nusantara, many taking TikTok videos of themselves in front of the 250-foot-tall and nearly 600-foot-wide monument to Garuda, the mythical bird that is Indonesia's national symbol. Most drive in from neighbouring cities in East Kalimantan province. Others fly to the airport in Balikpapan, a two-hour drive away.

As for the city's residents, many are young transplants from other parts of Indonesia and see themselves as pioneers of a new way of urban life.

Fachri Syamdoni Nawik, 26, a data consultant, moved in March. "It's cool to be the history maker, right?" he said.

Nusantara aims to be a "10-minute city," meaning that anyone should be able to reach their destination within 10 minutes by walking, cycling or using public transportation. Residents ride electric shuttle buses and are permitted to drive only cars that are deemed to be environmentally friendly. It is a revolutionary concept for Indonesians who grew up battling the vortex of traffic in places like Jakarta, the current capital.

"I had never seen any part of Indonesia like this before," said Adji Pramono, 48, the assistant director for food and beverage for the Swissotel hotel in Nusantara.

Adji, who was born and raised in Jakarta, said he would never return to work in that city, where had to wake up at 4 am in order to reach work at 8. "It's like I met people every day, and they were always angry," he said.

The vibe in Nusantara, he said, is different.

This reinvention was part of a pitch by Joko Widodo, when he was president, to move the capital 800 miles away from Jakarta, which is sinking into the Java Sea. Nusantara means "archipelago" in old Javanese and is a nod to the diverse islands and people of Indonesia.

But critics say that Nusantara, with an estimated cost of roughly $30 billion, symbolises the hubris of Joko, who launched many infrastructure projects, including a debt-ridden high-speed train line on the island of Java.

His successor, Prabowo Subianto, has yet to visit Nusantara after taking office last year and has cut the development budget. Recently, he appeared to cast doubt on the city's future, saying that it would continue as a "political capital."

I stayed at the Swissotel, one of two hotels in Nusantara and the only one with an international brand. Chrestian Pesik, the general manager, said that nine foreign ambassadors had stayed at the hotel recently and were exploring the possibility of opening embassies.

"People who don't know the journey of this city might close their eyes and say, 'This is going to be a ghost city,'" said Chrestian, 40. "But when they come here, they can feel that the city is growing."

When I asked what people do for fun here, he replied, "We run!"

The day I arrived, organisers were wrapping up a 50-kilometre, or 31-mile, trail race. Nusantara, known as IKN in Indonesia, appears to be the default venue for many races in East Kalimantan.

Part frontier outpost, part campus town, it remains unclear whether Nusantara will grow into the metropolis Joko envisioned. Officials say its current population is about 155,000, but the area surrounding the Garuda monument and the new presidential palace is home to only 10,000 people, the vast majority of them construction workers.

Nusantara is projected to cover nearly 1,000 square miles, or roughly twice the size of Los Angeles. For now, the area is mostly trees. Vast empty spaces dominate. There are limited options for restaurants and groceries, although a traditional market is being built. And for all of its greenery, there is very little shade, making the midafternoon heat unbearable.

Electricity is supplied through a combination of solar power and the power grid, but the long-term goal is for the city to run fully on clean energy.

Putri, 23, a civil servant, graduated with a degree in electrical engineering last year and moved to Nusantara in June. She said that she made new friends easily ("Most of us are in our 20s!") and that she never gets bored because she gets to attend food festivals and plant trees every month.

Many residents said their quality of life was better in Nusantara.

Fachri said he lived rent-free in a 10th-floor apartment, which was provided by the government. He has a flat-screen television hooked up to Netflix and, for the first time, air conditioning in his bedroom. Outside the apartment, there were three bins for separating trash. He described his current accommodation as the nicest place he has ever lived in. Downstairs, there is a gym, plus places for soccer and table tennis.

Nusantara wants to be "liveable and loveable," according to its visitor centre, which was largely empty when I was there. These are ambitious goals, but critics argue the city is hurting the environment. Conservationists say thousands of acres of mangrove forests, the habitat of the endangered proboscis monkey, have been destroyed.

The construction of the toll road connecting it to Balikpapan, the closest city, has cut off crucial water sources and led to increased flooding there, said Mappaselle, the head of the Balikpapan Coastal Working Group, an environmental group. Mappaselle, who goes by one name, said officials had not released an environmental impact assessment report.

Bambang Susantono was the head of the Nusantara Capital City Authority until he resigned in 2024. He said Joko pushed for much of the construction to be completed before Joko left office that year, but Bambang felt that accelerating the timeline could create problems. He said he was conscious about what happened after Brazil built Brasília, the new capital that is now surrounded by slums.

"Developing a city is developing a community, and not only the physical things," he said. "Because otherwise you are going to have a city without a soul."

One potential problem for the city is water. The dam built on the Sepaku River means that the city is "safe until 2030," Bambang said. Beyond that, officials would need to build another dam or pipe in water from other rivers.

On a recent Monday evening, several tourists posed for photographs in the parks. One of them was Puput Rianti, 23, who was taking wedding pictures with her fiance.

She travelled from Penajam, a town 30 miles away, and said she would love to live here. "We want to feel the progress," she said.

Throughout the city, the cranes continued to move. Andrinof Chaniago, Indonesia's former minister for national development planning, who initiated the relocation of the capital, said that worries about the project's fate were unfounded.

"It's impossible to turn back now," he said. "Cancelling it would only make everything that's been built go to waste."

The New York Times

A season of joy in a climate of fear

STANLEY CARVALHO

Christmas is a time for spiritual reflection, peace, love and shared joy. Sadly, in India, this universal feast unfolded under a shadow of fear and tension, marked by attacks, intimidation and harassment of Christians in the name of alleged religious conversion.

Disturbingly, incidents targeting Christmas celebrations were reported from across the country. These are only some of them.

In Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, Bajrang Dal workers recited *Hanuman Chalisa* in front of St Alphonsus Cathedral Church. In Rajasthan's Nagaur district, a private school principal alleged that a group claiming to be Bajrang Dal members threatened students and staff over Christmas celebrations at the institute.

In Kerala, the Lok Bhavan cancelled the Christmas holiday, and the chief postmaster general called off celebrations in post offices. In Pudussery, Palakkad, a group of carol singers, including children, was attacked.

In Nalbari, Assam, VHP-Bajrang Dal workers vandalised Christmas celebrations in a school and damaged festival items at shops. In Haridwar, Uttarakhand, a hotel run by the state tourism department cancelled celebrations on the banks of the Ganga following protests.

However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Christmas morning service at the Cathedral Church of Redemption in Delhi and later posted on X: "The service reflected the timeless message of love, peace and compassion. May the spirit of Christmas inspire harmony and goodwill in our society." A laudable gesture indeed, but the irony could not have been starker.

As Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin rightly observed, "When a few right-wing violent groups, acting in the name of the majority, indulge in attacks and riots, even as the prime minister participates in Christmas celebrations, it sends a disturbing message to the nation."

While the disruption of Christmas celebrations has been widely condemned, it is imperative that the continued, blatant harassment of Christians—particularly through the controversial anti-conversion bills brought in several states across India—is brought to an end.

According to the latest figures from the civil society group the United Christian Forum (UCF), there were 706 incidents of violence targeting Christians between January and November 2025, compared to 834 incidents in 2024. Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of attacks (183), followed by Chhattisgarh (156). Karnataka reported 57 incidents, while Rajasthan is next with 49 reported incidents.

These incidents reveal a coordinated pattern of targeting that combines physical violence, social pressure, and legal mechanisms to suppress Christian religious expression. In many of these cases, rights activists point out, no FIR is filed—sometimes even when formal complaints are made. In other situations, victims are afraid to approach the police, fearing the case will be turned against them and false charges filed.

Christians are routinely accused of forcible conversion, a claim that has vehemently been denied. Christians constitute less than 2.4% of India's 1.4 billion population, a figure that has remained unchanged since the 1951 Census.

If forcible conversions are indeed taking place, as alleged by the vigilante groups, they must be challenged and proven in courts of law. Courts have repeatedly pointed out the lack of evidence to support such claims and have affirmed that adult citizens are free to choose their faith. Thus far, no one has been convicted for forcible conversions. The Freedom of Religion Laws, known as anti-conversion laws, are in effect in 12 Indian states.

Historically, Christian missionaries have played a multifaceted role in India, contributing significantly towards education, healthcare, language development and social reform, including campaigns against *sati*, child marriage and caste discrimination. To accuse Christian organisations of forcible conversions reflects selective amnesia and the belittling of minorities to serve select ideological ends.

Church leaders are unanimous that these attacks represent a systematic and deliberate attempt to polarise society and "put minorities in their place". Others believe the aim is to intimidate the community through hate speeches and the vandalisation of churches and educational institutions.

It is not that the Christian leadership has remained silent. Concerns have repeatedly been raised with authorities, including those at the highest level of power. In light of the continuing attacks, the UCF has written to the PM, drawing his attention to the growing targeted violence and hostility faced by Christian citizens and seeking his urgent intervention.

Unless the normalisation of violence against Christians—as well as Muslims—is halted, the constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the very idea of a secular India will be rendered meaningless.

(The writer is a Bengaluru-based independent journalist)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: DECEMBER 1975

PM saved nation: Menon

Cochin, Dec. 28
Kerala Chief Minister C. Achutha Menon said here yesterday that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi "really saved India, at least temporarily, from the fascist trap laid by American imperialism and its agent provocateurs and hangers-on inside the country." Speaking at the valedictory function in connection with the 50th anniversary of the Communist Party of India, he said by declaring Emergency at the appropriate time Mrs. Gandhi administered a deadly, pre-emptive strike against the machinations of these forces.

25 YEARS AGO: DECEMBER 2000

Anti-Hrithik stir puts Koirala govt in crisis

Kathmandu, Dec 28 (PTI & UNI)
Anti-Hrithik Roshan protests took a serious political turn today with half of 113 ruling Nepalese Congress MPs revolting against Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala filing a no-confidence motion against him in the party. "We were compelled to file the motion seeking Koirala's ouster to prevent the country from plunging into a crisis and restore peace and security," Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba, leader of the dissident group, told reporters after 57 rebel MPs appended their signature to the motion.

OASIS | SRI M

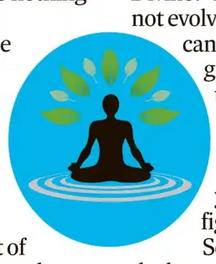
Surrender in the spiritual field

In the field of action, in the Kurukshetra war, Krishna asked Arjuna not to surrender his weapons but to take them up and fight because he was protecting *dharma*. Krishna says, "Surrender unto me."

So, surrender is not to worldly forces. In fact, if you do this, you will not be able to turn to spirituality at all.

There is a battle going on in us, aimed at defeating the temporal forces that take us away from the spirit. Surrender, not, to the forces that are tempting you or acting as obstacles to your spiritual path.

Surrender comes from the understanding, that however much we may intellectualise with our limited intelligence, we cannot touch Divinity, unless the mind says, "Now I can do nothing more, let me surrender."



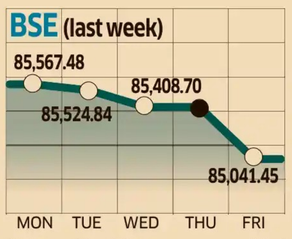
Surrender is to do with the mind which after trying to capture God in all directions, finally gives up and understands, "This is not in my hands. Let me pray for grace." Without grace one cannot surrender. In fact, I would go to the extent of saying that it is only with grace that one even turns to spirituality.

There are millions of people on this earth who do and achieve so many things, but how many really want to go into a serious search for the Divine? This is only because they have not evolved to the extent where they can turn to this. That requires grace. In fact, to surrender to the spiritual, one has to be a true warrior in the temporal and fight a battle because it is a constant battle. And if you surrender, you get help to fight the battle.

So, within us, this constant battle that goes on between righteousness and unrighteousness, between material pleasures and internal enjoyment of the spiritual; can be resolved only when you completely disregard this body and understand, "I am not this body but I am something other than this."

To abandon this field of activity and turn inward, is not admitting defeat. It is when you figure out that all this circus is finally not going to solve the problem, so let me keep quiet and in that quietness may be the Divine will reveal itself.

After all, the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali by definition say, '*Yogas chitta vritti nirodah*'. When all the *vrittis* or disturbances of this field called the mind are removed, then when the mind becomes quiet, that is the take off point for the soul towards its spiritual journey.



*Data as of Dec 26

*Markets were closed on Thursday due to Christmas

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
TRENT	5.47%	ASIAN PAINT	-1.88%
ULTRACEMCO	2.59%	ETERNAL	-1.54%
TITAN	1.56%	INDIGO	-1.50%
BEL	1.44%	SUNPHARMA	-1.48%
NTPC	1.30%	SBIN	-1.40%

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
SHRIRAM FIN	6.49%	HDFC LIFE INS	-1.78%
TRENT	5.49%	HERO MOTOCO	-1.70%
COAL INDIA	4.29%	SUN PHARMA	-1.60%
ULTRACEMCO	2.59%	SBI	-1.22%
HINDALCO	2.45%	DR REDDY'S LAB	-1.14%

Sensex (52-week)

Dec 26, 2024	Dec 26, 2025	
78,472.48	85,041.45	8.37%

Nifty (52-week)

Dec 26, 2024	Dec 26, 2025	
23,750.20	26,042.30	9.65%

10-year Bond yield 6.56%

Exchange Rates*

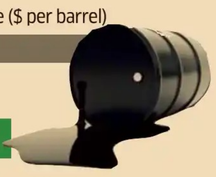
*Markets were closed on Dec 25 due to Christmas

Dollar	₹89.90	SGD	₹70.19
Pound	₹121.24	Yen (100 units)	₹57.50
Euro	₹105.85		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$60.64*
-2.57%
*Rate as of Dec 26



Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)
Petrol* ₹102.92 ₹0%
Diesel* ₹90.99 ₹0%

*Rates as of Dec 23 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹25500 - 26000
Arabica Cherry	₹13000 - 15000
Robusta Parchment	₹15000 - 16000
Robusta Cherry	₹9000 - 9200

*Rates as on Dec 26

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹787
Cross Breed (CB)	₹698

*Average rates as on Dec 26

IT hiring to remain robust in 2026 at mid-to-senior level

Demand expected to remain around AI, cloud, cybersecurity and data-led roles

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Though headwinds and macroeconomic uncertainty played a significant part in the IT services industry, resulting in muted growth in the first half of CY2025, things started stabilising in the second half with IT companies gradually recruiting both freshers and lateral hires. In the September quarter alone, Infosys added 8,203 employees, HCLTech added 3,489 employees, and Wipro 2,260 employees.

Infosys is on track to hire close to 20,000 freshers in FY26. During the company's Q2 earnings conference, CEO Salil Parekh said they are scaling up massively on AI, and that they are working on many projects on enterprise AI with clients.

Skills related to data, cloud, and software engineering for digital platforms are driving the job market, said workforce and talent solutions provider Quess Corp in its latest 'IT Workforce Trends in India 2025' report.

According to the report, the total IT job demand reached 1.8 million roles in 2025, a 16% rise over the previous year.

Organisations are prioritising hires who can build modern, agile technology capabilities. While the share of job postings demanding AI, data, cloud, cybersecurity, and platform engineering was 38% in 2023, it increased to 52% in 2025, insights from the report showed.

"India's IT hiring environment in 2025 marked a phase of stabilisation after an extended correction. While overall hiring remained measured, demand for specialised technology roles rose by approximately 45%, particularly across AI, data engineering, cloud modernisation and cybersecurity. Organisations shifted decisively away from volume-led recruitment towards capability-driven hiring, prioritising roles that directly support automation, platform resilience and revenue delivery," Adecco India Director and Business Head, Professional Staffing, Sanketh Chengappa said.

As we move into 2026, IT services hiring is entering a structurally different phase. "After a prolonged period of caution, demand has begun to rebuild around core capability areas such as AI engineering, cloud modernisation, data platforms and cybersecurity. What is changing is not just the volume of hiring, but the nature of it, as organisations move from experimentation to scaled deployment. We expect a 27-30% uptick in technology roles in 2026 across IT services, startups, GCCs, and non-tech enterprises," he said.

Chengappa also added that campus hiring has improved by 15-20%, and the sharper demand is at the mid-to-senior level, where enterprises need applied skills that integrate technology with business outcomes.

The Quess Corp report highlighted that mid-level professionals (4-10 years) form 65% of the 2025 demand, up from 50% in 2024. Due to high competition for niche talent, time-to-fill has extended to 45-60 days in 2025 (from 35 in 2022/23). Employers are now compressing cycles through faster offers and streamlined interviews.

As far as hiring in Tier-2 and 3 cities are concerned, they account for 10-12% with marginal gains during the 2024 slowdown. Ahmedabad, Kochi, Jaipur, and Coimbatore are leading secondary hubs. Still, 88-90% of IT hiring remains concentrated in Tier-1 metros.

Interestingly, high-value packages are no longer just about the pedigree of one's college, but about specialised employability. CIEL HR MD and CEO Aditya Narayan Mishra said while top-tier institutions still dominate these numbers, the rise of tiered hiring tracks at IT services firms is finally opening the door for 'specialists' from any background to claim these premium packages. The data clearly shows that while the 'floor' remains steady, the 'ceiling' is exclusively for those who have moved beyond generalist skills.

TOTAL IT JOB DEMAND
(in million)
1.38
2022
1.75 (+26%)
2023
1.55 (-11%)
2024
1.80 (+16%)
2025
In 2025, Bengaluru alone posted 420,000 IT job openings
Recruitment Trends
• There will be gradual growth in remote/ distributed hiring that could increase the share of non-metro talent in the IT workforce by 2026-27
• Organisations that maintained warm talent pipelines during the 2024 slowdown are benefitting in 2025's upcycle, having the ability to hiring quickly as needs arise
• Emerging technology fields are experiencing the fastest growth in hiring, as companies double down on digital transformation, data-driven projects, and automation
• Mid-career professionals are the most sought-after talent segment in 2025
"Much of the hiring during the year was driven by mid-career professionals. AI, cloud and cybersecurity skills saw particularly strong interest. The technology hiring market is moving steadily up the value curve. This momentum offers a positive base as hiring conversations carry into 2026.
- KAPIL JOSHI, CEO of IT Staffing, Quess Corp

Source: Quess Corp

Scarcity in emerging tech talent

However, talent availability is emerging as a clear constraint, with skill gaps increasing from 18% in 2023, to 25% in 2025, in high-demand areas such as AI, data engineering and cybersecurity. Addressing this gap will call for stronger industry-academia linkages, structured skilling initiatives and more flexible workforce models to support execution in 2026, Chengappa said.

Experts stress the need for upskilling employees. "As Indian IT services companies are eyeing skill-based hiring to thrive in a rapidly changing world, continuous upskilling will be critical for professionals who wish to remain competitive in this evolving market. Overall, while hiring will be more calibrated, companies will continue to invest in future-ready talent to support long-term growth," Biz Staffing Comrade Managing Partner Puneet Arora said.

Foreign investors withdraw Rs 1.6L cr from Indian equities in 2025

Despite the weak showing this year, market participants expect the trend to reverse in 2026

NEW DELHI, PTI

Foreign investors fled Indian equities in 2025 at a scale never seen before, pulling out a record Rs 1.6 lakh crore ($18 billion) as volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, especially potential US tariffs, and stretched valuations eroded risk appetite, though flows are expected to turn sustainably positive in 2026.

Also, rising US bond yields, a stronger dollar and concerns over geopolitical uncertainties tilted global capital towards developed markets, away from emerging markets such as India.

Despite the weak showing this year, market participants expect the trend to reverse in 2026.

"We expect FPIs to return sustainably in India as nominal growth and earnings pick up in CY26. Closure of the trade deal with the US should narrow tariff differentials, while Fed rate cuts will keep the dollar soft, favouring emerging-market assets," said Garima Kapoor, deputy head of research and economist at Elara Securities India.

Apart from global tailwinds, domestic factors are also expected to play a role in reviving flows. Indian earnings growth relative to peers, policy continuity and reforms, particularly around the Union Budget, could act as key triggers, said Vikas Gupta, CEO and chief investment strategist at OmniScience Capital.

At the same time, uncertainty on the global macro front will continue to shape FPI behaviour. "The trajectory of global interest rates, especially the timing and pace of rate cuts, along with developments on tariffs, will be key drivers," said Himanshu Srivastava, principal manager-research at Morningstar Investment Research India, adding that a moderation in US bond yields and a softer dollar could further support a revival in equity inflows.

As of now, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have taken out Rs 1.58 lakh crore from the Indian equity markets, while invested over Rs 59,000 crore in the debt market (till December 26) as per data available with the depositories.

This makes 2025 the worst year for equity flows, surpassing the previous record outflow of Rs 1.21 lakh crore in 2022 and coming after a marginal net inflow of just Rs 427 crore in 2024. In contrast, 2023 had seen a robust Rs 1.71 lakh crore equity investment.

Explaining the drivers, analysts point to a mix of global and local pressures.

"Persistently high US interest rates and elevated bond yields improved risk-free returns in developed markets, prompting capital rotation and strengthening the dollar, tightening financial conditions for emerging markets," Srivastava said.

Phases of rupee depreciation further eroded dollar-based returns and raised hedging costs, dampening India's risk-adjusted appeal. These pressures were compounded by geopolitical uncertainty as concerns over energy prices, supply-chain disruptions and trade-related tensions periodically weighed on sentiment, he added.

On the domestic front, elevated valuations in certain segments prompted tactical profit-taking, said Sorbh Gupta, head-equity at Bajaj Finserv Asset Management adding that these were short-term adjustments rather than a reassessment of India's long-term growth story.

The monthly flow pattern reflects this volatility. FPIs sold equities in eight of the 12 months in 2025, with buying limited to April, May, June and October.

The equity sell-off by FPIs was cushioned by strong buying from domestic institutional investors, supported by rising SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) inflows from retail investors.

In contrast to equities, FPIs showed a clear preference for debt, investing a net Rs 59,000 crore in Indian debt in 2025, driven by India's inclusion in global bond indices, attractive yield differentials and portfolio rebalancing amid volatile equity markets.

The phased inclusion of Indian government bonds under the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) in indices such as the JP Morgan Global Emerging Markets Index created steady demand from passive funds, Morningstar's Srivastava said.

According to OmniScience Capital's Gupta, FPIs probably booked gains in the equity markets and rotated some of it into the debt FAR to lock-in the relatively higher interest rates in the Indian debt. "It is clear that we are in for a rate cutting cycle and Debt FAR offers locking-in higher interest rates with an upside from capital gains when the cuts happen," he added.

Infosys denies sale of govt-allotted land

BENGALURU, DHNS

IT services firm Infosys has clarified that it did not sell any land allotted to it by the government at market rates. In a statement, the company has stated that the land that has been divested was purchased as non-commercial and non-industrial land, at market value, and not allotted by the government.

Last week, a media report had claimed that Infosys sold a 53.5-acre land parcel near Bengaluru to real estate developer Puravankara Ltd for an estimated Rs 250 crore.

"As part of Infosys' asset divestment program, a land parcel located in Attibele, Bengaluru, was identified for divestment and to optimize asset utilisation. The sale was executed in adherence with Infosys' policies, external approvals and compliance with regulatory requirements," the IT company said in a statement.

Further, it said the land under question was not allotted to it by the government, and that it had acquired it in the open market.

In a regulatory filing, Puravankara stated that the acquisition of this land will strengthen its presence in one of the city's emerging residential growth corridors. This land parcel has a potential to generate gross development value of Rs 4,800 crore, it said.

PE spend in real estate down 29% in 2025

NEW DELHI, PTI: Private equity (PE) investments in real estate fell 29% this year to $3.46 billion due to lower inflow of funds in housing and warehousing projects, according to Knight Frank India. PE investments stood at $4.9 billion last year. Inflow of PE funds hit record $6.73 billion during CY2018.

Knight Frank India in an analysis on Sunday noted that investors remained cautious this year. Among different asset classes, the data showed that the PE fund inflow in office assets rose to $2 billion during this calendar year, from $1.85 billion in 2024.

DH INTERVIEW

'Digital India is a diversified, multi-industry high-tech theme'

India is at the cusp of a digital disruption, with its digital economy expected to grow 3x nominal GDP over the next decade. Companies leading this digital wave are compounding at 22%, rapidly gaining market share from offline incumbents and outpacing traditional IT services businesses which lag at 4-5% growth. **Varun Sharma**, Fund Manager, Digital India Fund, Motilal Oswal AMC explains to **Mahesh Kulkarni** of *DH* that the runway ahead is massive, with a once-in-a-decade opportunity to invest in companies poised to scale to global levels over the next two decades, with rapid digital ecosystem growth. *Edited excerpts:*

What will be the key drivers behind India's digital economy growing at 3x nominal GDP over the next decade?

India's digital economy is expected to grow about three times faster than the overall GDP, because three big forces are working together. First, the country's public digital infrastructure — like Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, FASTag, and ONDC — has made it incredibly easy and cheap for people and businesses to come online and transact. These open systems are a global first and give India a huge head start. Second, affordable smartphones and cheap data have created a massive, mobile-first consumer base that's using digital tools every day, especially in smaller towns. It's similar to how China's internet boom took off, but in India, it's happening through open-access platforms instead of closed ecosystems. Third, millions of small and mid-sized businesses are now going digital with SaaS tools, APIs, and AI — just like US firms did during their cloud revolution. Together, these three trends — digital rails, connected consumers, and business tech adoption — are powering a flywheel that could make India's digital economy expand much faster than its overall GDP growth.

How is digital fundamentally different from IT, and in what ways is a digital layer disrupting traditional IT services?

In simple terms, India's IT industry is like a group of factories that provide similar services — mostly providing technology services to other businesses around the world. These companies earn by billing hours or projects, so their growth depends on how much work they take on. The digital economy, on the other hand, is a broad and fast-changing ecosystem that cuts across every sector — finance, healthcare, retail, travel, education, and even manufacturing. It's made up of apps, platforms, and digital products that keep evolving, learning from user data, and earning through subscriptions, ads, or transactions. While IT is about "doing work for clients in one narrow set of services", digital is about "building diversified experiences for users across several industries". In the US, the shift from traditional IT to digital gave rise to cloud and SaaS giants like Amazon Web Services and Salesforce; in China, it led to platform ecosystems like Alibaba and WeChat. India is now following that path — traditional IT firms are being disrupted by digital-first businesses that use AI, APIs, and cloud platforms to deliver smarter, more personalised services across multiple industries.

Which sectors are leading India's digital transformation today, and from where will the next wave of disruption come in the next 3-5 years?

Right now, India's digital story is being led by the areas where technology has made everyday life simpler and cheaper — especially payments, shopping, and logistics. Thanks to UPI, paying anyone from a street vendor to a large business takes just seconds, making digital money a daily habit. Online shopping and local delivery services — powered by networks like ONDC — have brought millions of small sellers into the digital fold. Logistics and mapping tech (like MapMyIndia, Delhivery, etc.) have connected even remote towns to the e-commerce economy. The next big wave of change will go deeper into sectors that touch daily life and government systems — like healthcare (digital health records, e-pharmacies, teleconsultations), education, and public services moving online through GovTech. Manufacturing and industrial businesses will also digitise rapidly under the "China+1" strategy, using automation and IoT to compete globally.

What catalysts will enable deeper digital adoption and penetration in Tier-2 and 3 Indian cities?

Digital adoption in smaller Indian towns will grow much faster over the next few years because the key ingredients are finally falling into place. The first is ease of payments: UPI, UPI Lite, and upcoming credit-on-UPI features are making it simple for everyone — from shopkeepers to cab drivers — to go cashless without needing fancy devices. The second is several vertical-specific B2B and B2C platforms. The third big change is language and interface: apps are becoming voice-enabled and available in regional languages, making technology feel more natural to millions of new users. On the business side, local kirana stores and agents are turning into "digital touchpoints", helping people pay bills, get small loans, or access government services. Affordable smartphones, faster 5G and BharatNet internet, and simplified KYC rules are further breaking barriers.

How should investors view valuation cycles in digital-forward companies?

In the long term, fundamental growth reflects in stock returns. The digital space is usually characterised by competitive monopolies that sustain for longer periods and generate several use cases for their users over time. This enables accelerated scale-up and hypergrowth in initial phases. Profitability usually expands once leadership position is established and over the long term, for leading players, business and profitability tends to be healthy and scaled up. One needs to take a longer-term view on digital businesses and ignore shorter-term movements in businesses and markets. There is an acute challenge of properly valuing digital businesses and both academics and practitioners are facing it.

What are some implications of current regulations – laws, frameworks, and classifications – in India's digital landscape?

Regulation is pivotal: data protection and consented data-sharing, platform interoperability (UPI/ONDC/UHI), fintech licensing, marketplace vs inventory models, and clarity on digital classifications (intermediary, marketplace, lender, gig). To de-risk and bring investor clarity, align disclosures to unit-economics cohorts, standardise KPIs (take-rate, NRR, CAC payback), adopt regulatory sandboxes, and map businesses explicitly to public-rail policies — turning India's "digital public infrastructure" from perceived policy risk into a measurable moat, as the US did with cloud/SOX disclosure, and China by codifying payments/logistics standards.

A quiet review of 2025 and what one can expect in 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, the global order appears calmer than in recent years, though far from comfortable. While recent years were defined more by inflation shocks, abrupt monetary tightening, and volatility, that phase is now giving way to a relatively stable and somewhat predictable macroeconomics. As such, it seems ever more likely that investment outcomes will depend less on "surprises" and more on policy consistency, execution, and restraint.

For investors, this shift is consequential and demands a pivot. As the phase of broad, momentum-driven gains fades, we may see scattered performance increasingly tied to balance sheet strength, cash flow visibility, and capital allocation discipline rather than "narrative driven momentum." As Index-level gains mask wide differences beneath the surface, individual company metrics may reveal broader trends.

Fixed income, on the other hand, long overshadowed by equities, is also regaining relevance as yields stabilise with narrowing premia and investors are forced to reconsider the role of debt as a source of income and portfolio stability.

India growth remains among the highest globally, (supported in no small, measure by public capital expenditure, services exports, and incremental progress in manufacturing), expectations from domestic markets are high may yet outpace performance. The real challenge for those seeking to manage public's funds,' may just be investor mandates which seek greater emphasis on execution quality, return on invested capital, and governance standards. While domestic participation in financial markets, a la SIPs,' remains deep, a moderation in speculative excess may be beneficial for long-term wealth creation though secular SIP flows are yet to stand the test of a market fall.

Portfolio diversification continues to remain important. Investors are likely to pay more attention to currency dynamics, driven in no small measure by the Indian Rupee depreciation of 2025 and "FOMO" emanating from precious metal melt-up. While support for the dollar investments remain, interest rate and growth differentials are narrowing potentially prompting a rethink. For India, a sharply weaker dollar is neither likely nor necessary. A broadly range-bound dollar, combined with calibrated rupee depreciation, would support export competitiveness without importing undue inflation therefore, in the coming 12 months, Rupee stability is likely to matter more to investors than direction.

ANUBHAV SRIVASTAVA
MANAGING PARTNER, ARYZEN CAPITAL ADVISORS

And what of precious metals which have seen momentous levels closing 2025? In this environment, gold and silver retain relevance in Indian portfolios. Gold continues to serve as a hedge against global uncertainty, currency volatility, and tail risks, particularly for long-term savers. Silver, while more volatile, benefits from its dual role as a monetary metal and an industrial input, especially in renewable energy and electronics. Neither should be viewed as a primary return driver over extended periods, but as a stabilising allocation within a diversified portfolio.

Technology, particularly artificial intelligence, is moving from experimentation to implementation. Indian firms are increasingly focused on productivity gains, cost efficiency, and decision support rather than headline innovation and this is where AI gains relevance.

For households and savers, 2026 reinforces a simple truth. Rising incomes and deeper market participation do not automatically translate into economic security. Asset allocation, tax efficiency, and risk management continue to matter more than short-term market calls especially in a deglobalising world order. Therefore, making financial planning a continuous process rather than a one-time decision.

The defining advantage in 2026 may well be restraint. In a world saturated with information and investible themes, the ability to filter noise and align decisions with long-term objectives matter more than speed or conviction. The year ahead is unlikely to deliver dramatic inflection points. Instead, it will quietly reveal the outcomes of earlier choices—steady, unspectacular, and ultimately, more enduring.

'Karnataka must become India's AI lighthouse'

The state can set the national template to ensure every citizen is able to harness AI

RAVI VENKATESAN

AI BOT
AI
LEARNING FOR THE TECH REVOLUTION
India has a narrow window to seize the AI revolution
Karnataka, the cradle of India's IT success, must lead the way
AI is not something to fear. Whether it uplifts or destroys depends on how we use it
Everyone must learn to think entrepreneurially, to spot problems and turn them into ventures

All revolutions are disruptive. They destroy the old order and create new winners and losers. The Industrial Revolution made Britain rich and powerful, while India was colonised and left behind. America rode the next two revolutions — electric power and computing — to dominate the 20th century. Today, China is racing ahead in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

India has a narrow window to seize this revolution. If we miss it, there will be no Viksit Bharat. But India is not a single monolith—it is a subcontinent. Our states are the real engines of progress. Karnataka, with a population equal to the UK's and a proud record as the cradle of India's IT success, must now lead again — this time as India's AI lighthouse.

The AI hype – and the hard reality

We are in the middle of an AI bubble. Hype is ahead of reality; 95% of companies are still stuck in pilots. Yet, as Bill Gates once said, we overestimate the speed of change, but underestimate its ultimate impact. AI will, over time, reshape everything — every job, business, and institution.

Already, the tremors are visible. Amazon, Microsoft, TCS, Salesforce and others have announced tens of thousands of layoffs, often justified as "AI productivity gains". Employment in IT services has flattened. Entry-level roles — the easiest to automate — are disappearing. Unless we act, AI could destroy more jobs than it creates in the next decade.

History offers a sobering parallel. When steam power arrived, it made Britain wealthy, but wrecked livelihoods for a generation. Child labour proliferated; life expectancy fell; Luddites smashed machines in despair. Only a century later did real wages and living standards rise. The lesson is clear: technological revolutions eventually lift societies — but the pain can last a lifetime for workers caught in transition.

Five ways work is being redefined:

- Stable jobs are vanishing. Permanent employment is a relic. Opportunity will increasingly mean self-employment, freelancing, or entrepreneurship
- Degrees matter less; skills matter more. Companies like Google and Palantir hire for demonstrated capability, not pedigree
- The entry-level crisis. Fewer starter jobs mean fewer chances to learn by doing — an existential problem for youth employability
- The three-stage life is over. We will live longer and must keep learning, earning and reinventing ourselves continuously
- Adaptability is the new employability. Technical skills open doors, but adaptive skills — resilience, curiosity, collaboration — keep you inside

The new toolkit: Digital, entrepreneurial, human

To thrive in the AI age, Karnataka must build three bundles of capability.

1. **Digital fluency:** Every citizen must be able to use AI tools, interpret results, and exercise judgement online. Digital literacy is no longer just about using Word or Excel — it is about prompting effectively, spotting misinformation, and using chatbots to enhance productivity. Private-sector partnerships are essential; global firms have a vested interest in creating skilled users. Two decades ago, Microsoft's Project Shiksha trained 800,000 teachers and reached 10 million children. We now need similar-scale initiatives with Microsoft, Google, OpenAI, Infosys and others.

2. **Entrepreneurship as a life skill:** Jobs will shrink, but opportunities will explode. Everyone must learn to think entrepreneurially—to spot problems and turn them into ventures, however small. Karnataka can lead by integrating entrepreneurship into every school, ITI and college curriculum. Through initiatives like GAME and Udyam Learning Foundation, over 1.5 million students in government schools already learn entrepreneurship experientially — starting micro-businesses and solving real problems. By 2030, every young person in the state should have such exposure.

3. **Human skills:** AI can write a marketing plan in minutes, but only a human can judge which idea fits context and lead teams to execute it. Communication, empathy, and leadership remain irreplaceable. As Nobel laureate Arno Penzias said: "If you don't want to be replaced by a machine, stop acting like one." Our education system still trains people to do what machines do better. We must teach what machines can't —through humanities, arts, and community problem-solving. UNICEF's Generation Unlimited showed how engaging youth to fix local issues builds confidence, empathy, and teamwork. Bengaluru-based ReapBenefit's Solve Ninjas platform is doing this today: over 100,000 youth have implemented civic and climate solutions. Such programmes could be Karnataka's modern-day NCC or NSS.

Helping workers through transitions

AI's disruption will hit not just youth, but mid-career workers. Today, companies shed employees with a press release and no support. This "toothpaste-tube" mentality is unsustainable. Businesses must help people reskill and redeploy; otherwise, consumer demand and social stability will collapse.

We need a coalition of government, industry and civil society to design lifelines—apprenticeships for graduates, continuous learning platforms, and fair severance with career counselling. Microsoft's Passport to Earning already provides micro-credentials in digital, financial, and entrepreneurial skills to over a million learners. Scaled partnerships with NASSCOM, CII and state agencies could make such lifelong learning universal.

Karnataka's mission: AI for all

AI is not something to fear. Like fire or electricity, it is a tool. Whether it uplifts or destroys depends on how we use it. Karnataka can set the national template by launching an AI Skilling Mission — a partnership of bazaar, samaj, sarkar — to ensure every citizen, from a gig worker in Kalaburagi to a student in Kodagu, can harness AI.

If we do this, Karnataka will once again lead India into a new industrial age — an age not of machines replacing people, but of people empowered by machines.

(The writer is a chair of Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP) and a former chairman of Microsoft India)

WEEK AHEAD

Equities may trade firm on mild recovery in rupee

As we close out 2025, the broader market setup remains constructive

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equities are expected to trade firm this week with a positive bias, supported by a mild recovery in the INR/USD and stable global cues. However, with Christmas and New Year holidays leading to quieter trade across global markets, activity may remain subdued and volumes light. Key data releases to watch include US Initial Jobless Claims, US and China Manufacturing PMI figures, and India's monthly auto sales. With fewer immediate triggers, investor attention would shift to the upcoming Q3 earnings season, which is likely to set the tone for markets as we enter 2026.

In the week gone by, markets ended modestly higher with the Nifty up 0.3%, the Smallcap100 gaining 1.8%, while the Midcap index remained flat. Sector performance was mixed, with Defence (+5.5%), Metals (+2.7%), and FMCG (+0.8%) emerging as key gainers. Defence and Railways stayed in focus on expectations of higher public capex in the upcoming Union Budget, supported by news of the Defence Acquisition Council preparing nearly Rs 80,000 crore worth of orders. Metals continued their strong 2025 momentum with year-to-date gains above 20%, driven by Fed rate-cut expectations, dollar softness, and improving demand visibility from China, alongside disciplined supply and stronger balance sheets.

Recent global data also boosted sentiment, with US GDP growing a robust 4.3% in Q3, the fastest in two years, and jobless claims coming in lower than expected—signalling resilience in the world's largest economy. Back home, the RBI announced liquidity measures including Rs 2 lakh crore of government bond purchases and a $10 billion swap, which should ease liquidity, support credit growth, and help financial markets stabilise. Notably, 2025 also marked a turning point for Indian banking regulation, with 80+ reforms simplifying rules, enabling M&A financing, and strengthening the foundation for credit-led growth ahead.

On the consumption front, urban demand remains a bright spot, rising 8.8% YoY in October on the back of easing food inflation, better credit transmission, and stable wage trends. Rural demand, however, saw a contraction of 1.3% due to weak farm prices and softer terms of trade. Meanwhile, India and New Zealand have finalised terms for a comprehensive FTA, expected to be signed in early 2026, with bilateral trade targeted to double from the current $2.4 billion over the next five years.

As we close out 2025, the broader market setup remains constructive, supported by improving liquidity, a stabilising earnings cycle, and a policy backdrop that favours investment and credit expansion. Looking ahead to 2026, returns are expected to be earnings-led, with a preference for large caps and a selective, quality-focused approach towards midcaps.

In summary, the market tone remains stable to positive, with Q3 earnings and global macro cues set to guide the next phase of market direction.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited)

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

Midwest (ID: MIDWESTLTD) — BUY
Upside +18%** | Last close ₹1,690 | Target: ₹2,000*

Ambuja Cement (ID: AMBUJACEM) — BUY
Upside +35%** | Last close ₹554 | Target: ₹750*

ICICI Bank (ID: ICICIBANK) — BUY
Upside +26%** | Last close ₹1,351 | Target: ₹1,700*

Astra Microwave (ID: ASTRAMICRO) — BUY
Upside +12%** | Last close ₹978 | Target: ₹1,100*

Biocon (ID: BIOCON) — BUY
Upside +16%** | Last close ₹396 | Target: ₹460*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

BEST OF 2025

Top 10 smartphones of the year

ROHIT KVN
BENGALURU, DHNS

The year 2025 witnessed the launch of a lot of exciting smartphones with visually pleasing designs, powerful processors and bigger batteries than the ones launched in previous years.

I had the opportunity to review several smartphones throughout the year. And, as we say goodbye to 2025, here's my curated list of the phones that impressed the most.

Most Powerful: Apple iPhone 17 Pro Max

Apple's 6.9-inch iPhone 17 Pro Max is a beast. It houses an A19 Pro chip, touted to be the most powerful silicon on a phone.

It features a six-core CPU, six-core GPU, and 16-core Neural Engine to deliver computer-level performance. With the hardware-accelerated ray tracing feature, it offers immersive gaming, while the new innovative vapour chamber keeps the phone cool even during long gaming or 4K video sessions.

Price: Starts at Rs 1,49,900. The standard iPhone Pro (6.3-inch) starts at Rs 1,34,900

Most Versatile: Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra

Though Samsung has played it safe with the S25 Ultra's design by keeping its refined aesthetic from the predecessor, the upgrades are meaningful. It comes with new 200MP main camera, a zippier Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Elite processor, and deep integration of Galaxy AI and Google Gemini AI make it a productivity powerhouse.

Despite housing a 5,000mAh battery, it is slimmer than its predecessor and can easily last for more than a day. And, with S Pen support, S25 Ultra becomes even more versatile and gives an edge over the rivals, as none of them support it.

Price: Starts at Rs 1,29,999

Best Camera: Google Pixel 10 Pro

The Pixel 10 Pro may look similar to its predecessor, but its Tensor G5 silicon-backed generative AI camera tool is unparalled. Features such as Magic Editor, Best Take, and the new AI Camera Coach ensure professional-quality photos. Compared to the predecessor, the thermal performance is improved, and it can deliver a full day of battery life. With perks such as a free one year of Google AI Pro with 2TB cloud storage makes it highly compelling.

Price: Rs 1,09,999

Best Foldable: Samsung Galaxy Z Fold7

Samsung is finally close to the perfect foldable. When folded, it feels like a regular phone in the hand. It measures 8.9mm in thickness and has a 6.5-inch cover display with a 21:9 aspect ratio. Unfolded, it sports a massive 8.0-inch AMOLED display with just 4.2mm thickness, perfect for multitasking and multimedia consumption. Backed by Qualcomm's custom Snapdragon 8 Elite for Galaxy, it delivers smooth performance. Feature-rich cameras, and a sturdy build quality round out the improved user experience over the predecessor.

Price: Starts at Rs 1,74,999

Best Compact Phone: Samsung Galaxy Z Flip7

The Galaxy Z Flip7's compact flip-style is the perfect design for a phone. The device features a massive 6.9-inch screen and can instantly fold in half its size. This is such a meaningful space-saving feature; it helps users put both the earphone case and the phone in the same pocket without any hassle.

Also, it comes with better build quality, a reliable Exynos 2500 deca-core processor and delivers longer battery life compared to the predecessor.

Price: Starts at Rs 1,09,999.

Value-for-Money Premium Phone: Xiaomi 15

Xiaomi 15 perfectly balances premium design and performance. With a Snapdragon 8 Elite chip, solid battery life, and a Leica-tuned camera that shines in all lighting conditions, it's a fantastic choice for its price.

Price: Starts at Rs 64,999

Best Phone with Long Battery Life: OnePlus 15R

OnePlus 15R's big 7,400mAh battery is a game-changer. Coupled with custom Snapdragon 8 Gen 5 silicon, it can easily last a day and a half under normal usage while maintaining smooth performance.

Price: Starts at Rs 47,999

Best Mid-Range: Nothing Phone (3a) Pro

Nothing's mid-range phone is jam-packed with the right features and is aptly priced for the Indian market. It has excellent build quality. Backed by Snapdragon 7s Gen 3, it does well with day-to-day performance, and most importantly, excels with battery life. The camera is decent for its price.

Price: Starts at Rs 27,999

Best Budget: Redmi 15

Redmi 15 is the perfect option for customers with a tight budget. The large 6.9-inch display, dependable Qualcomm Snapdragon 6s Gen 3 chipset, and big 7,000mAh battery make it perfect for streaming and casual gaming, while its camera performs admirably good for the price.

Price: Starts at Rs 14,999

Best Gaming Phone: iQOO 15

The 6.85-inch 2K+ AMOLED display with 144Hz refresh rate and anti-reflection coating is tailor-made for gamers. Backed by the Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5, Adreno 840 GPU, and a huge VC vapour chamber, it can easily handle any graphics-heavy games and gen AI apps without breaking a sweat.

Price: Starts at Rs 72,999

Mcap of top 7 most-valued firms declines by Rs 35,439 crore

NEW DELHI, PTI: The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued firms declined by Rs 35,439.36 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with State Bank of India taking the biggest hit, in line with a muted trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 112.09 points or 0.13%.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, SBI, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) faced erosion from their valuation, while HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel and Infosys were the winners.

The market valuation of State Bank of India tumbled Rs 12,692.1 crore to Rs 8,92,046.88 crore.

Reliance Industries' valuation dropped by Rs 8,254.81 crore to Rs 21,09,712.48 crore.

Bajaj Finance faced an erosion of Rs 5,102.43 crore to take its market valuation to Rs 6,22,124.01 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Larsen & Toubro declined by Rs 4,002.94 crore to Rs 5,56,436.22 crore and that of ICICI Bank edged lower by Rs 2,571.39 crore to Rs 9,65,669.15 crore.

The mcap of LIC diminished by Rs 1,802.62 crore to Rs 5,37,403.43 crore and that of TCS dipped by Rs 1,013.07 crore to Rs 11,86,660.34 crore.

More traffic e-challans pending than paid

Over Rs 39k cr in unpaid fines, shows data by Ministry of Road Transport

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The total unpaid amount from e-challans issued for traffic violations in the country exceeds the fines collected from vehicle users, according to the latest data from the Union Ministry of Road Transport.

Since January 1, 2015, when the e-challan system was introduced, a total of 40.26 crore e-challans amounting to Rs 61,228.04 crore in fines were issued up to December 27, 2025.

Of these, 15.31 crore e-challans were disposed of, resulting in the collection of Rs 22,156.11 crore. However, 24.95 crore e-challans, carrying fines worth Rs 39,071.92 crore, are pending, the ministry said.

A total of 11.28 crore e-challans were sent to court, of which 1.18 crore were disposed of, while 9.47 crore remain pending.

VIOLATIONS

- Govt struggles to collect dues as unpaid challans pile up
- Pending dues far exceed collections since 2015
- 40 crore e-challans issued, over 24 crore yet to be cleared
- UP tops list of traffic violators with 7.9 crore challans
- Fines averaging Rs 15 crore generated daily but only Rs 5.5 cr recovered

UP tops list

Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest number of e-challans issued at 7.93 crore, followed by Tamil Nadu (7.58 crore), Kerala (4 crore), Haryana (2.04 crore) and Gujarat (1.69 crore).

Between 2015 and 2025, traffic fines averaging Rs 15 crore were generated daily, but the government was able to recover only around Rs 5.5 crore per day, leaving nearly Rs 10 crore unpaid, shows the data.

Challan norms

The ministry also said that Rule 167 of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989, lays down the procedure for issuance and payment of challans.

Sub-rule (5) specifies that "challans issued under sub-rule (1) or (2) shall be disposed of within 90 days from the date of issuance, in physical or electronic form, except in cases instituted for prosecution by a court".

If a challan remains pending beyond the time period specified, except in cases instituted for prosecution by a court, then applications relating to the offender's driving licence or the registration of the motor vehicle mentioned in the challan shall not be processed by the licensing or registering authority, except applications relating to permits, fitness and taxes of the motor vehicle," the Ministry of Road Transport said.

Govt: Aviation aid control room cleared 13k plaints since Dec 3

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR) set up by the Ministry of Civil Aviation has resolved around 13,000 grievances raised by fliers since December 3, especially those related to the disruption of IndiGo flights in the first week of the month.

Established under the leadership of Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu, the 24x7 PACR aims to institutionalise a unified and future-ready mechanism for passenger assistance and crisis response. The existing AirSewa system has been fully integrated into PACR.

Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha said the PACR functions as an integrated hub bringing together officials from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Airports Authority of India (AAI), airline operators and other key stakeholders under one roof at Udaan Bhawan in New Delhi.

"The PACR operates round-the-clock, continuously monitoring aviation operations, attending to passenger calls and coordinating real-time assistance and grievance resolution very efficiently and effectively," he said.

As of now, he said more than 13,000 passenger grievances have been resolved through focused monitoring and expedited interventions at the PACR since December 3.

PM Modi flags rising antibiotic resistance

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people not to take antibiotics without consulting a doctor.

In his monthly "Mann Ki Baat" radio address, Modi noted that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recently released a report that said that antibiotics were proving ineffective against many diseases like pneumonia and urinary-tract infections (UTIs). "This is a matter of great concern for all of us," he said.

According to the report, Modi said, a major reason for this was people's indiscriminate use of antibiotics. He said antibiotics were not medicines that could be taken mindlessly, and that medicines should be used only on the doctor's advice.

Narendra Modi

"Nowadays, people have started believing that just taking a pill will cure all their problems. This is the reason diseases and infections are proving to be too strong for these antibiotics," he said.

'2025 proud milestone'

He also said: "The year 2025 was one of proud milestones for India. Whether in national security, sports, scientific innovation or on the world's biggest platforms, India's impact was visible everywhere."

The PM said during Operation Sindoor, images of love and devotion toward "Maa Bharti" (Mother India) emerged from every corner of the nation, and people expressed their emotions and gratitude in their own ways.

Modi said an old, blurry photograph of three Buddhist stupas of Baramulla found in France revealed Kashmir's glorious past, dating back nearly 2,000 years.

The PM also announced that the birth-centenary celebrations of freedom fighter Parvati Giri would be held next month.

He also paid tributes to Giri, who hailed from Odisha, for her dedication to the freedom struggle and social reform.

UP: Muslim youth assaulted for attending Hindu girl's party; later booked by police

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

Two Muslim youth attending a birthday party for a Hindu girl at a café in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly town were allegedly assaulted by saffron activists on Saturday night. They were later booked by the police along with others!

According to local reports, about two dozen Bajrang Dal workers barged into the café and created a ruckus at the party, where eight students of a local nursing college — including the two Muslim youngsters — were present.

The reports said the saffron workers assaulted the Muslim youth alleging that they were indulging in "love jihad".

The birthday girl kept pleading with the activists that the Muslim youths were her classmates, but the BD workers didn't stop, said the reports, adding that they also ransacked the café.

A police team reached the spot after being informed of the incident, took the Muslim youth and the café's owner into custody, and booked them for apprehension of breach of peace.

The police said that a case was also lodged against two BD leaders — identified as Deepak Pathak and Rishabh Thakur — in connection with the incident.

The police subsequently said preliminary investigations revealed that the allegations of "love jihad" were false, and that all those who were at the party were students of the same college and were friends.

UP has seen several cases involving allegations of "love jihad", with saffron outfits saying they would not tolerate it under any circumstances.

MISCELLANY

◆COMICS◆

Blondie

LOOK AT THIS PAPER THE BOSS GAVE ME RIGHT BEFORE I LEFT WORK
HONEY, IT'S JUST A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER
I KNOW!
THE BOSS TOLD ME IT BETTER LOOK LIKE A REPORT BY MONDAY OR ELSE!

Hagar The Horrible

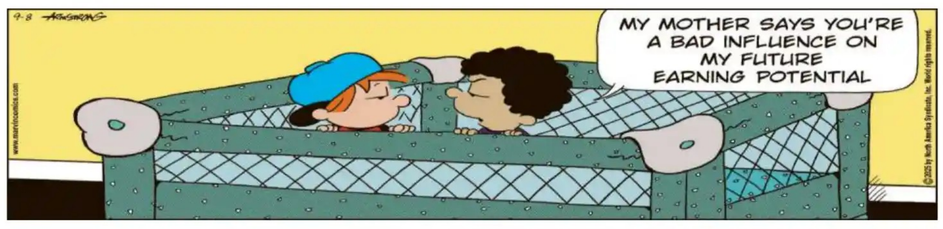
I KNOW HAGAR TO BE A HARD-WORKING, LOYAL AND COMPASSIONATE HUMAN BEING!
YOU PICKED AN EXCELLENT CHARACTER WITNESS!
I COULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB SCREENING THE JURY POOL
HAGAR PUNCHED ME IN THE NOSE
Hagar stole my Chickens
HAGAR INSULTED MY HUSBAND

Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

JOE DI MAGGIO NEVER COMPLAINED ABOUT PLAYING BALL ON A HOT DAY!
WHO WAS JOE DI MAGGIO?
ONE OF THE GREATEST OUTFIELDERS WHO EVER LIVED, THAT'S WHO!
I THOUGHT HE JUST DRANK COFFEE

Marvin



JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RTEIG

YFREO

PAOLJY

ARYNEL

THE RAINFOREST PLAYERS PRESENT
THE MACAW OF THE WILD
Who do we have here?
This is Buck. I've never had a better companion.
This is great!
WHEN THE MACAWS PUT ON A PLAY, IT WAS A ---

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: " " (Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: KNOWN CHORD DEGREE VANISH
Answer: After going fishing for the first time, — HE WAS HOOKED

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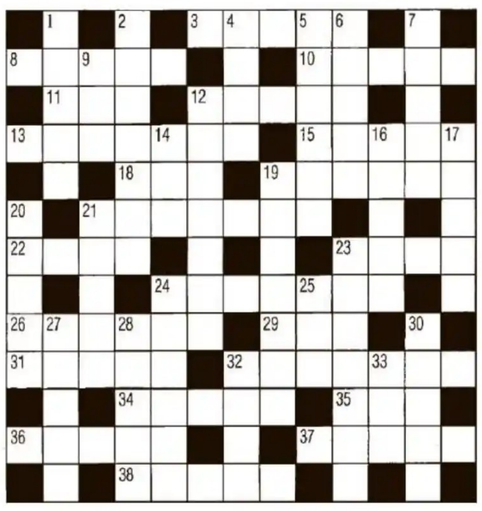
CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12319



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Quietly tie in position (5)
8 Possibly more love for a lover (5)
10 Not fully frozen stiff (5)
11 Allowed out of jail, etc. (3)
12 Trimmed a ragged drape (5)
13 Less than 50%? Definitely! (3,4)
15 One may have to send round for him (5)
18 In general, a long time (3)
19 He's not a good sailor (6)
21 About to struggle round with the goods (7)
22 How little Tommy plays host (4)
23 It can be one way to get fifty quid (4)
24 Happy to get some plot simplified (7)
26 A street light in the wrong place (6)
29 In very different ways, one is wrong (3)
31 It arises from heatedness (5)
32 Angelic phrases, possibly (7)
34 General points of interest in heredity (5)
35 Jack has a right to a little gratitude (3)
36 An iron container (5)
37 It's accommodating to me, perhaps, at Leatherhead (5)
38 A couple of letters from a beau (5)

DOWN
1 They can also be played back (5)
2 Ties the rest in knots (7)
4 Two pages back to back (4)
5 Believe cider is brewed at central Acton (6)
6 Duck turns up among the ingredients (5)
7 The sky? (5)
9 Joined me for a little tea (3)
12 Clearly a nail hammered into laminated wood (7)
14 Be heavy hearted again (3)
16 Like a natural born streaker (5)
17 Make a closure on sales, perhaps (5)
19 Possibly angelic expressions in the style of 32 Across (7)
20 Book possibly mounted (5)
21 Played loudly because a half note? (5)
23 A politician from the nor' east (7)
24 She prepares a meal for her dad (6)
25 A master with class (3)
27 Say there's a short way to brew tea (5)
28 How Edgar stormed around (5)
30 The composition of a trio (5)
32 Banish to Southend! (4)
33 Ready to centralise occupations (3)

ACROSS
3 Snow house (5)
8 Light boat (5)
10 Animal's nose (5)
11 Information (3)
12 Flutters (5)
13 Merry (7)
15 Arrive at (5)
18 Can (3)
19 Couch (6)
21 Truthfulness (7)
22 Group of three (4)
23 Slimming plan (4)
24 Of the stomach (7)
26 Revoke (6)
29 Pitch (3)
31 Utter contemptibly (5)
32 Advantage (7)
34 Happen again (5)
35 Crib (3)
36 Bedtime drink (5)
37 Drinking tube (5)
38 Fortunate (5)

DOWN
1 Golf term (5)
2 Not very (4,3)
4 Unit of liquid measure (4)
5 Fish hawk (6)
6 Beginning (5)
7 Liquid from fruit (5)
9 Born (3)
12 Burial, cremation (7)
14 Flipper (3)
16 Garret (5)
17 Bulky or heavy (5)
19 Stammer (7)
20 Celebrities (5)
21 Hippopotamus, in short (5)
23 Regulates, controls (7)
24 Rich cake (6)
25 Managed (3)
27 Find pleasure in (5)
28 Boy's name (5)
30 Essential (5)
32 Male rabbit (4)
33 In favour of (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2660

ACROSS: 1 Bastion, 5 Austere, 9 Recover, 10 Tail end, 11 Drown, 12 Eye-opener, 13 Marco Polo, 15 Holly, 16 Funny, 18 Set alight, 21 Out of hand, 24 Twist, 25 Rebound, 26 Explain, 27 Dietary, 28 Shyness.

DOWN: 1 Boredom, 2 Succour, 3 Inventory, 4 Nerve, 5 At the most, 6 Skimp, 7 Eternal, 8 Elderly, 14 On stand-by, 15 Hell to pay, 16 Floored, 17 Notable, 19 Grimace, 20 Tetanus, 22 Fauna, 23 Dress.

◆SU-DO-KU-6789◆

		9						2
6		1		7	3			
			8				6	7
				8	7		4	
		2				8		
	7		1	6				
5	9				1			
			6	3		7		5
4						6		

medium

SOLUTION TO 6788

6	7	2	3	9	5	1	8	4
4	5	9	1	6	8	3	2	7
3	1	8	2	7	4	9	6	5
8	9	4	5	3	6	7	1	2
2	6	1	7	8	9	4	5	3
5	3	7	4	2	1	6	9	8
9	4	6	8	5	7	2	3	1
7	2	5	9	1	3	8	4	6
1	8	3	6	4	2	5	7	9

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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E1 I1 U1 S1 R1 O1 S1

I1 Y4 H4 F4 T1 T1 R1 — 7th Letter Triple

S1 I1 U1 F4 M3 N1 F4 — Double Word Score

I1 I1 R1 P3 M3 D2 E1

RACK 1 | RACK 2 | RACK 3 | RACK 4

PAR SCORE 145-155
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

B3 A1 M3 B3 O1 O1
E1 N1 O1 U1 G2 H4
G2 E1 N1 T1 L1 E1 R1
D2 E1 V4 O1 U1 T1

RACK 1 = 12
RACK 2 = 20
RACK 3 = 58
RACK 4 = 14
JUDD'S TOTAL 104

PAR SCORE 65-75

HITORI-3243

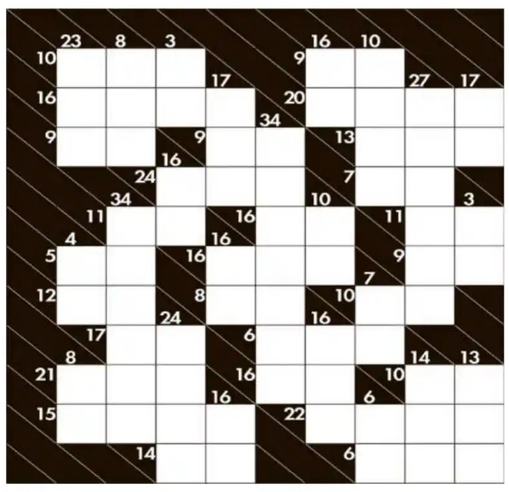
1	2	7	8	7	3	5	7
1	6	2	4	3	7	1	7
3	5	7	7	7	8	4	6
4	7	7	7	5	2	7	1
7	8	4	2	6	5	7	7
6	1	1	5	3	7	3	8
7	7	1	3	8	1	6	2
7	3	7	1	8	4	8	7

SOLUTION TO 3242

■	8	6	1	■	5	3	4
5	6	4	■	1	7	■	2
3	1	■	4	■	6	8	■
■	2	5	8	4	■	1	7
2	5	■	6	■	4	■	1
■	7	1	■	5	3	6	8
8	4	3	7	2	1	■	5
■	3	8	■	7	■	5	6

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3243



SOLUTION TO 3242

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3780

■			3		4			■
	■			7	9		■	
		6				4		
			■		■			
		8		2				
			■		■	1		
		7				■		5
2	■		6			9	3	4
■		5		9			6	■

SOLUTION TO 3779

2	9	7	6	3	5	4	1	8
6	3	5	4	1	8	7	9	2
8	1	4	9	7	2	6	3	5
9	8	3	1	2	4	5	7	6
4	7	6	8	5	3	9	2	1
1	5	2	7	6	9	3	8	4
7	4	1	2	9	6	8	5	3
5	2	8	3	4	7	1	6	9
3	6	9	5	8	1	2	4	7

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

Trump says Ukraine war diplomacy in 'final stages'

US prez says Putin, whom he spoke to just before meeting Zelenskyy, was very serious about peace

PALM BEACH, AFP

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday diplomatic efforts to end the Ukraine war were in the "final stages", as he sat down to talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to discuss a new peace plan.

"I think we're very, we're in final stages of talking, and we're going to see. Otherwise it's going to go on for a long time," said Trump, adding that he did not have a deadline for the process.

Trump said Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who he spoke to just before his meeting with Zelenskyy, was "very serious" about peace.

He added that there would be "a strong agreement" to guarantee Ukraine's security, one which would involve European countries.

Quit Donbas: Russia

Russia on Sunday urged Kyiv to withdraw its troops from the eastern Donbas region to put an end to the conflict in Ukraine.

Ukraine should now take the "brave decision" to pull out of the Donbas "without delay", the Kremlin's diplomatic advisor Yuri Ushakov told reporters. Ukraine's departure from the fifth of the eastern Donetsk region in the Donbas still under its control is a key Russian demand for any agreement.

Ushakov, speaking after a call between President Vladimir Putin and US leader Donald Trump, said the two leaders had agreed that any temporary ceasefire in Ukraine would simply prolong the conflict.

"Russia and the United States share the same position, which is that the Ukrainian and European proposal for a temporary ceasefire (...) would only prolong the conflict and lead to a resumption of hostilities," he said.

Russia rejects any temporary halt to the fighting, arguing such a period would allow Ukraine to rearm.

Instead, it wants a final settlement addressing what it says are the root causes of the conflict.

Donald Trump greets Volodymyr Zelenskyy upon his arrival for meetings at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club on Sunday. REUTERS

Lockheed Martin pitches C-130Js for IAF; plans production

MARIETTA (US), PTI

As India prepares to procure up to 80 military transport planes, US aerospace major Lockheed Martin has pitched its C-130J Super Hercules as the best choice and said the aircraft will provide it a "stronger" heft for tactical airlift among the Quad nations.

If Lockheed Martin gets the opportunity, then it will set up a mega hub in India to produce the "iconic" aircraft, and it will be the first such global facility outside of the US, top officials of the company told PTI.

To date, Lockheed Martin has delivered more than 560 aircraft from the C-130J Super Hercules family, which have accumulated more than three million flight hours. The leading tactical airlift has been serving 28 operators in 23 nations.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) currently operates 12 C-130Js.

Alongside the standard transport variant, Lockheed Martin offers multiple specialised configurations of the C-130J which enable the aircraft to perform intelligence, electronic warfare, and special forces support, search and rescue and command roles.

Besides India, the three other Quad member nations -- the US, Australia and Japan -- have been operating C-130Js.

"The C-130J Super Hercules reflects proven performance and versatility across 20 unique mission sets. It holds 54 world records. Proven in every challenging operational environment, the C-130J's structural durability is the standard for reliability, safety, and excellence," said Patricia Trish Pagan, Vice President, Air Mobility and Maritime Missions at Lockheed Martin. Pagan said Lockheed Martin is the preferred partner globally because the C-130Js are "built to deliver and built to last", adding the aircraft will be the "best option for India".

Dhaka rejects India's concerns over minority safety

'Isolated incidents portrayed as systemic persecution of Hindus'

DHAKA, PTI

Dhaka on Sunday rejected concerns raised by India over the treatment of minorities in Bangladesh, calling it an "inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narrative" that does not reflect the facts.

India's Ministry of External Affairs on Friday said the "unremitting hostilities" against minorities in Bangladesh are a matter of "grave concern". It demanded punishment for the perpetrators involved in the lynching of a Hindu youth in the Mymensingh area last week.

"The unremitting hostilities against the minorities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, Christians and Buddhists, at the hands of extremists is a matter of grave concern,"External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said.

Govt allowing violence, says media body

Bangladesh's newspaper Editors Council has accused a "section of the interim government" of allowing the recent spate of violence in the country after the death of Inqilab Mancha leader Sharif Osman Hadi, reports PTI.

Responding to Jaiswal's remarks, Bangladesh foreign ministry's spokesperson SM Mahbubul Alam said, "The Government of Bangladesh categorically rejects any inaccurate, exaggerated, or motivated narratives that misrepresent Bangladesh's longstanding tradition of communal harmony."

Alam claimed that there were "systematic attempts to portray the isolated incidents of criminal acts as systemic persecution of the Hindus and maliciously used to propagate anti-Bangladesh sentiments" in different parts of India.

Pak Dy PM admits India attacked Nur Khan base

First-time admission 8 months after armed conflict between two nations

LAHORE, PTI

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has admitted that India attacked its Nur Khan airbase in the early hours of May 10, in possibly a first-time admission eight months after the four-day armed conflict between the two countries.

Dar also said that Islamabad did not request mediation between Pakistan and India during the May conflict, but claimed that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan expressed a desire to speak with New Delhi.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians.

The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes between

the two countries and ended with an understanding to stop the military actions on May 10.

"As many as 79 of 80 drones sent by India were intercepted within 36 hours. India then made the mistake of attacking the Nur Khan Airbase in the early hours of May 10, prompting Pakistan's retaliatory operation," Dar, who is also the foreign minister, said while outlining Pakistan's diplomatic engagements in 2025.

Dar said that on May 10, US Secretary of State Rubio called him at around 8.17 am, in which he conveyed that India was ready for a ceasefire and asked whether Pakistan would agree. "I said we never wanted to go to war," Dar added.

He further said Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal later contacted him seeking permission to speak with India and "subsequently confirmed that a ceasefire had been agreed."

Dar also claimed that Pakistan shot down seven Indian jets during the May 7 air battle, without providing any evidence in support of his claims.

The minister reiterated Pakistan's position that lasting peace in region is linked to a resolution of J&K dispute.

Was told to hide during Op Sindoor: Pak Prez

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has revealed that he was advised to "hide in a bunker" when India launched Operation Sindoor in May this year, reports PTI. Zardari made the revelation while speaking at an event in Larkana, Sindh province, to mark the 18th death anniversary of his wife and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. My MS (Military Secretary) came to me and said, 'Sir, the war has started.' I had actually told him four days earlier that a war was going to happen. He said, 'Sir, let's go to a bunker (being a safe place)'... I said, 'If martyrdom is to come, it will come here. Leaders don't die in bunkers. They die on the battlefield," he said.

Myanmar junta stages election after five years of civil war

YANGON, AFP: Voters trickled to Myanmar's heavily restricted polls on Sunday, with the ruling junta touting the exercise as a return to democracy five years after it ousted the last elected government and triggered a civil war.

Former civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains jailed, while her hugely popular party has been dissolved and was not taking part.

Campaigners, Western diplomats and the United Nations' rights chief have all condemned the phased month-long vote, citing a ballot stacked with military allies and a stark crackdown on dissent.

The pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party is widely expected to emerge as the largest bloc, in what critics say would be a rebranding of martial rule.

"We guarantee it to be a free and fair election," junta chief Min Aung Hlaing told reporters after casting his ballot in the capital Naypyidaw.

"It's organised by the military, we can't let our name be tarnished."

The Southeast Asian nation of around 50 million people is riven by civil war.

Brigitte Bardot, French actress and activist, dies at 91

PARIS, AP: Brigitte Bardot, the French 1960s sex symbol who became one of the greatest screen sirens of the 20th century and later a militant animal rights activist, has died. She was 91.

Brigitte Bardot. AFP

Bruno Jacquelin, of the Brigitte Bardot Foundation for the protection of animals, told The Associated Press that she died at her home in southern France, and would not provide a cause of death. He said no arrangements have yet been made for funeral or memorial services. She had been hospitalised last month.

Bardot became an international celebrity as a sexualized teen bride in the 1956 movie "And God Created Woman." Directed by her then-husband, Roger Vadim.

At height of a cinema career that spanned some 28 films and 3 marriages, Bardot came to symbolise a nation bursting out of bourgeois respectability. Her tousled, blond hair, voluptuous figure and pouty irreverence made her one of France's best-known stars.

Bardot's second career as an animal rights activist was equally sensational. She travelled to the Arctic to blow the whistle on the slaughter of baby seals; she condemned the use of animals in laboratory experiments; and she opposed sending monkeys into space.

African Gold wins feature

MUMBAI RESULTS

African Gold, from Darius Byramji's yard and ridden by Akshay Kumar, won the Maharaja Jiwajirao Scindia Trophy, the feature event of the races on Sunday.

1. PA D'Avoine Trophy - 1200M: Storm Cloud (Avinash Paswan) 1; Joondalup (C Umesh) 2; Shirsha (SG Prasad) 3; Azure (Trevor Patel) 4; Wb: 1/2, Shd, 1-1/2L. T: 1:10.38. TB: Narendra Lagad. Fav: Bee Magical.

2. Topspin Plate - 1000M: Elevate (Yash Narredu) 1 Spectra (Sandesh) 2; Tempo (Ajinkya) 3; Rogue (Mosin) 4; Wb: 2-3/4, 1-1/2, 1-3/4l. T: 0:58.98. TB: Deepesh Narredu. Fav: Elevate.

3. Karl Umrigar Salver - 1400M: Ataash (A Omkar) 1; Christophany (Ramswarup) 2; Chagall (Neeraj Rawal) 3; Market King (Akshay Kumar) 4; Wb: 2-1/2, 2-1/4, 1L. T: 1:24.08. TB: Nazak Chenoy. Fav: Chagall.

4. Lt.Col. Govind Singh (VRC) Trophy - 1400M: Buckingham (Antony Raj) 1; D'Aratagnan (G.Vivek) 2; Alexios (Sandesh) 3; Vortex (Yash Narredu) 4; Wb: 3/4, 2-3/4, 3-1/2L. T: 1-23.97. TB: Karthik Ganapathy. Fav: Alexios.

5. Dr.L.C.Nagree Trophy - 1200M: Don Julio (Sandesh) 1; Skandha (TS Jodha) 2; Mulan (CS Jodha) 3; Santana Row (Ramswarup) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 1-1/4L, Snk. T: 1:10.79 TB: Rehanullah Khan. Fav: Charlie Brown.

6. Maharaja Jiwajirao Scindia Trophy - 1800M: African Gold (Akshay Kumar) 1; Psychic Star (G Vivek) 2; Thalassa (C.Umesh) 3; Odysseus (Neeraj Rawal) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 1/2, 1/2L. T: 1-48.42. TB: Darius Byramji. Fav: Psychic Star.

7. D.W.Reid Plate - 1600M: Lightning Blaze (Nazil) 1; Maratha Admiral (NS Parmar) 2; Baleno (Bhawani Singh) 3; Leo The Lion (Mustakim Alam) 4; NR: Exotic Star. Wb: 1/2, 5-1/4L, Shd. T: 1:39.50. TB: Narendra Lagad. Fav: Jagger.

8. Ram Zodge Plate - 1400M: Zafferano (Sandesh) 1; Starseed (Antony Raj) 2; Timeless Fortune (Yash Narredu) 3; Surrealist (Siddharth) 4; Wb: 3-1/4, Shd, 1-3/4L. T: 1:23.47. TB: A Jodha. Fav: Zafferano.

Bengaluru Dividends

I race: Rs 225w; 34, 18, 15p; Fc: Rs 2,316; Q: Rs 667; Shp: Rs 61; Thp: Rs 39: Tri: Rs 26,280 & 5,631; Ex: Rs 63,915 & 27,392.

II race: Rs 26w; 12, 18, 12p; Fc: Rs 97; Q: Rs 102; Shp: Rs 44; .Thp: Rs 44; Tri: Rs 361 & 140; Ex: Rs 4,259 & 6,085.

III race: Rs 52w; 22, 17p; Fc: Rs 148; Q: Rs 65; Shp: Rs 27; Thp: Rs 41; Tri: Rs 266 & 101; Ex: Rs 781 & 344.

IV race: Rs 36w; 11, 15, 13p: Fc: Rs 121; Q: Rs 65; Shp: Rs 38; Thp: Rs 40; Tri: Rs 132 & 70; Ex: Rs 1,202 & 1,054.

V race: Rs 39w; 19, 20, 29p; Fc: Rs 172; Q: Rs 137; Shp: Rs 44; Thp: Rs 65; Tri: Rs 1,777 & 1,980; Ex: Rs 6,658 & 2,853.

VI race: Rs 55w; 13, 15, 22p; Fc: Rs 141; Q: Rs 73; Shp: Rs 42; Thp: Rs 43; Tri: Rs 1,700 & 863; Ex: Rs 4,567 & 1,345.

VII race: Rs 758w; 127, 13, 13p; Fc: Rs 9,240; Q: Rs 804; Shp: Rs 35; Thp: Rs 38; Tri: Rs 18,902 & 8,101; Ex: Rs 30,446 (c/o).

VIII race: Rs 26w; 11, 15, 22p; Fc: Rs 48; Q: Rs 42; Shp: Rs 35; Thp: Rs 43; Tri: Rs 141 & 200; Ex: Rs 1,011 & 409.

Jackpot: Rs 11,57,078 (c/o). **I treble:** Rs 822 (109). **II treble:** Rs 17,011 (15).

CRICKET VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

K'taka bank on batting might

Mayank's men take on wobbly Tamil Nadu in their third Group A game

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
DHNS

Defending champions Karnataka have won their first two group matches against Jharkhand and Kerala convincingly. X

An on-song Karnataka would look to exploit Tamil Nadu's vulnerabilities when the arch-rivals lock horns in their third Vijay Hazare Trophy Elite Group A fixture at the Gujarat College Cricket Ground in Ahmedabad on Monday.

Heading into the high-profile clash, the 22-yard strip remains a talking point. Compared to the Narendra Modi Stadium which has seen scores over 400, the GCA Ground has been a low-scoring venue, with teams managing to surpass the 285-mark just once in four innings in the ongoing competition. And that could play a significant role when both sides pick their respective elevens.

Mayank Agarwal's men have stamped their batting authority in the tournament so far, winning both their Group A games in scintillating fashion. Against Jharkhand, Karnataka registered the highest successful chase in the tournament's history, reaching 413 with 15 balls to spare.

Karnataka, then, carried the momentum into the Kerala clash and produced another clinical batting show to brush aside the neighbours by eight wickets.

The tournament has also seen Devdutt Padikkal push for higher honours, making a strong case to be in the ODI mix.

Padikkal has been a bridge in both of Karnataka's run chases, registering two successive hundreds, while batting through the crucial middle-overs phase. The 25-year-old averages 135.50 with a strike rate of 106.27 and is currently leading the scoring charts with 271 runs.

He has been ably supported by Karun Nair, who smashed an unbeaten 130 (130b) against Kerala and the duo will hope for another outing against a wobbly Tamil Nadu side.

Karnataka will also be thrilled to see Agarwal back among the runs, registering a fluent fifty in the opening game.

After a sloppy bowling effort in the first game, Karnataka were disciplined with the ball in their second. Led by left-arm pacer Abhilash Shetty (3/59) and leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal (2/61), they restricted Kerala to 284/7 on a good surface.

Turning to the Tamil Nadu camp, their biggest strength lies in their batting unit with Sai Sudharsan, Narayan Jagadeesan and Pradosh Ranjan Paul shaping their top three. They have also received decent hands from Mohamed Ali and Sunny Sandhu.

On the bowling front, Gurjapneet Singh and Govinth Ganesh have impressed and the new-ball pair will look to cause early damage in the powerplay.

Consistency, however, remains TN's Achilles heel. With one win and a loss so far, they have a task at hand against a confident Karnataka unit.

Kashvi, Shreya steer Karnataka

Gujarat awaits in semifinals after seeing off Bengal

BENGALURU, DHNS

Kashvi Kandikuppa

An all-round effort from Kashvi Kandikuppa and a brilliant Shreya S Chavan hundred helped Karnataka reach the semifinals of the Women's U-19 one-day trophy, defeating Bengal by 36 runs at the Veerangan Cricket Academy Ground in Pune on Sunday.

After having called it right at the toss and opting to bat, Karnataka -- riding on Shreya's century (108) and Kashvi's near ton (94) -- posted a competitive 270 for the loss of eight wickets in 50 overs. Snigdha Bag was the pick of the bowlers for Bengal (3/29).

Chasing 271 for a spot in the semifinal, Bengal were shot out for 236 in 46 overs, with Vandita K Rao (3/33), Harini N (2/22), Nandani Chauhan (2/29) and Kashvi (2/48) sharing nine wickets between them.

Karnataka will take on Gujarat in the semifinal on December 30.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 270/8 in 50 overs (Rachitha Hatwar 37, Shreya S Chavan 108, Kashvi Kandikuppa 94; Diya Nandi 2-58, Snigdha Bag 3-29) bt Bengal: 236 all out in 46 overs (Shivanshi 60, Prativa Mandi 38, Priyanka Goldar 37; Harini N 2-22, Vandita K Rao 3-33, Kashvi Kandikuppa 2-48, Nandani Chauhan 2-29).

Another double for Muddappa

BENGALURU, DHNS: Mumbai's Hanuman Pawshe (Fast Track Racing India) snatched the title in the premier Unrestricted class after Hemanth Muddappa (Mantra Racing) was penalised for a jump start in the final run to provide a dramatic finish to the Mmsc fmsci Indian National Motorcycle Drag Racing Championship at the Madras International Circuit here on Sunday.

Going into the fourth and final round, both Pawshe and Bengaluru's Muddappa were tied on 55 points with the former's team-mate Alimon Saidalvi (Bengaluru) two points adrift of the leaders.

In the final, Muddappa was pulled up for a jump start which left Pawshe the winner.

Results: National Champions: 4-Stroke Super Sport Unrestricted: Rider: Hanuman Pawshe (Mumbai, Fast Track Racing). Team: Fast Track Racing India; 4S 1051-1650cc SS: Rider: Hemanth Muddappa (Bengaluru, Mantra Racing). Team: Fast Track Racing India; 4S 851-1050cc SS: Rider: Hemanth Muddappa (Bengaluru, Mantra Racing). Team: Mantra Racing; 4S 551-850cc SS: Rider: Aditya Acharya (Bengaluru, Pvt). Team: Team 99 Racing: 4S 166-225cc SS: Rider: Ali Hussain (Mumbai, Pvt). Team: Team 99 Racing; 4S Girls (Super Stock, 165cc): Rider: Lapis Lazuli (Nagercoil, C2 Racing). Team: C2 Racing; 4S 165cc Super Sport Indian: Rider: Abdul Shaikh (Mumbai, Pvt). Team: Accsys India Rookies Racing Team: 4S 361-559cc SS Indian (Single Cylinder) – Rider: Mujahid Pasha (Bengaluru, Fast Track Racing India). Team: Fast Track Racing India: 4S 361-559cc SS Indian (Twin Cylinder) – Rider: Sharukh Khan (Mumbai, Mantra Racing). Team: Mantra Racing: 2-Stroke 130cc SS: Rider: Syed Imran (Bengaluru, Fast Track Racing India). Team: Fast Track Racing India: 2S 131-65cc SS: Rider: Syed Imran (Bengaluru, Fast Track Racing India). Team: Fast Track Racing India.

Ollie Watkins

Watkins stretches Villa's winning streak

LONDON, AFP

Ollie Watkins came off the bench to maintain Aston Villa's unexpected Premier League title challenge by scoring twice in a 2-1 win over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Meanwhile Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored for a sixth consecutive game as Leeds denied Sunderland a place in the top five with a 1-1 draw at the Stadium of Light on Sunday.

Back to London, Watkins had scored just three times all season prior to being unleashed by Unai Emery for a second-half double.

An 11th consecutive victory takes third-placed Villa back within three points of leaders Arsenal, who they face next on Tuesday.

Less than a month ago Chelsea were Arsenal's closest challengers, but they have won just once in six league games since to slide to fifth.

The Blues were left to rue not making more of their first-half dominance despite leading 1-0 at the break.

Cole Palmer flashed a shot wide early on and Enzo Fernandez's curling effort dropped inches beyond the far post.

Results: Chelsea: 1 (Joao Pedro 37th) lt to Aston Villa: 2 (Watkins 63rd, 84th); Sunderland: 1 (Simon Adinga 28th) drew with Leeds United: 1 (Dominic-Calvert Lewin 47th).

IN BRIEF

Kashvi to lead Karnataka

▸ The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) has named a 15-member squad for the upcoming BCCI under-15 Women's One-day trophy, set to be played in Kolkata from January 2 to 10, reports DHNS.

Kashvi Kandikuppa has been named the captain of the side, while Nesara Sapthagirish will be her deputy.

Squad: OY Rohini Dechamma, Sheetal S (wk), Kashvi Kandikuppa (c), Nesara Sapthagirish (vc), Aarushi Mitra, Avni, Yashika K Gowda, Maria Francia M, Harshitha K, Patil Nynisha Reddy Tanushree R, Nithyashree BA, Sankepalli Sreeka Chatura, Saanvi HR, Kashvi S. Support staff: Coach: Rakshitha Krishnappa; Coach: Chandu V; Manager: Jahnavi SK; Physiotherapist: Padmavani.

Shadab returns to Pak squad

▸ Fit-again allrounder Shadab Khan returned to Pakistan's squad for next month's three-match Twenty20 international series in Sri Lanka, selectors said Sunday, reports AFP from Karachi.

The 27-year-old missed a large part of Pakistan's cricket with a shoulder injury since June but regained full fitness after surgery in Britain.

Pakistan squad: Salman Agha (captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Nafay, Mohammad Nawaz, Salman Mirza, Mohammad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan, Usman Tariq.

Morris passes away at 62

▸ Hugh Morris, the former England cricketer, who later spent time as chief executive of the England and Wales Cricket Board, has died at 62, reports AP from Cardiff, Wales.

An opening batter, Morris made three appearances for England and helped Glamorgan become county champions in 1997, his final year before retirement.

Onkar, Thejaswi claim cross country gold

BENGALURU, DHNS: Bangalore Urban's Onkar Rajendra Panhalkar and Thejaswi NI emerged victorious in the men's and women's 10km runs, respectively, at the Karnataka State Inter-District Cross Country Championships in Mysuru on Sunday.

Onkar crossed the finish line in 29:15.7 minutes to bag gold ahead of Bangalore Urban's Karan Gehandule (29:16.8), who won silver and Tumakuru's Guruprasad (29:45.3), who took home a bronze in the men's section.

Thejaswi, on the other hand, clocked 34:44.6 to top the women's podium. Two other runners from Bangalore Urban -- Aradhana (34:52.8) and Priyanka C (35:06.6) -- finished in second and third positions.

Results: Men (10km): Onkar Rajendra Panhalkar (Bangalore Urban) 29:15.7, 1; Karan Gehandule (Bangalore Urban) 29:16.8, 2; Guruprasad (Tumakuru) 29:45.3, 3.
Boys: Under-20 (8km): Kalyan JR (Bangalore Urban) 24:51.7, 1; Akhil Kumar (Ramanagara) 24:54.6, 2; Shailesh Kushwaha (Bangalore Urban) 24:54.8, 3.
U-18 (6km): Praveen Arjun Arage (Kodagu) 18:19.9, 1; Chandrashekar Basavaraj (Koppal) 18:37.9, 2; Laxman Siddappa Hirali (Bangalore Urban) 18:50.6, 3.
U-16 (2km): Prem Burud (Belgavi) 5:43.2, 1; Aditya Heggi (Kalaburagi) 5:44.2, 2; Sofiyan Sudhani Jamadar (Belagavi) 5:46.7, 3.
Women (10km): Thejaswi NI (Bangalore Urban) 34:44.6, 1; Aradhana (Bangalore Urban) 34:52.8, 2; Priyanka C. (Bangalore Urban) 35:06.6, 3.
Girls: Under-20 (8km): Vaishnavi Rawal (Belagavi) 21:25.9, 1; Shilpa R. Hosmani (Dharwad) 22:50.1, 2; Tamanna (Bangalore Urban) 22:50.5, 3.
U-18 (6km): Nagini (Dakshina Kannada) 14:41.0, 1; Charishma (Dakshina Kannada) 14:53.1, 2; Akshra Majukar (Belagavi) 15:12.6, 3.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Kerala vs Madhya Pradesh, Bengal vs Chandigarh **(9 am). LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

HOCKEY

HIL: Soorma Hockey Club vs Shrachi Bengal Tigers **(women, 7:30 pm). LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

CRICKET FOURTH T20I

Shafali, Smriti smash records

India post their highest T20I total before taking 4-0 lead

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PTI

An all-round India rode on Smriti Mandhana (80) and Shafali Verma's (79) record partnership followed by spinner Vaishnavi Sharma's impressive 2/24 to beat Sri Lanka by 30 runs in the fourth women's T20I and take a 4-0 lead in the five-match series here on Sunday.

After Mandhana and Shafali set the platform for India's highest women's T20I total of 221/2 with the highest partnership of 162 for any wicket, Vaishnavi bowled an impressive 4-0-24-2 to help the home side record a commanding win.

Chasing a mammoth 222, Sri Lanka came out firing with Hasini Perera (33 off 20 balls, 7 fours) and skipper Chamari Athapaththu (52 off 37 balls, 3 fours and 3 sixes) providing the early fireworks.

But the target proved too much for the island team to manage, as they lost wickets in a flurry towards the end to finish at 191 for six in their 20 overs.

The left-handed Perera set the tone with a flurry of fours at the start while Athapaththu once again displayed her rich array of strokes, but the asking run-rate on a flat pitch kept rising steeply for the Sri Lankan side.

In a high-scoring game where any error in line or length was punished severely by the batters from both the teams, the young Vaishnavi bowled a total of nine dot balls to exert pressure from one end while accounting for the dangerous Athapaththu and Harshitha Samarawickrama (20).

Arundhati Reddy (2/42) chipped in with a couple of vital strikes, dismissing Perera in the sixth over after a 59-run opening stand and later, got the rid of Kavisha Dilhari (13). The fifth and final T20I will be played here on December 30.

Earlier, Mandhana and Shafali went on a record-making spree, powering India to their highest Women's T20I total of 221 for two.

Having batted second in each of the three games so far in this five-match rubber, Mandhana and Shafali put on a batting masterclass to hammer Sri Lanka bowlers all around the Greenfield International Stadium after being asked to bat first.

Towards the end, Richa Ghosh smacked a 16-ball 40 not out and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur made 9-ball 16 not out, as India rattled up a massive total.

Indian openers Mandhana and Shafali shared a massive 162-run stand in 15.2 overs, which is now the best partnership for any wicket for the country in women's T20Is.

It was also the fourth occasion when Mandhana and Shafali stitched an alliance of 100 or more, as the pair bettered its own record of 143 against the West Indies at Gros Islet in 2019.

Brief scores: India: 221/2 in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 79, Smriti Mandhana 80, Richa Ghosh 40 n.o.) bt Sri Lanka: 191/6 in 20 overs (Hasini Perera 33, Chamari Athapaththu 52; Imesha Dulani 29, Arundhati Reddy 2-42, Vaishnavi Sharma 2-24). **Result:** India won by 30 runs. **PoM:** Smriti Mandhana. **Series:** India lead 4-0. **Next match:** Dec 30 (Thiruvananthapuram).

Shafali Verma (left) and Smriti Mandhana hit half-centuries in a record opening partnership to help India beat Sri Lanka by 30 runs in the fourth T20I in Thiruvananthapuram. PTI

Humpy, Erigaisi finish third

Carlsen wins rapid title while Gukesh drops to 20th

DOHA, PTI

Indian chess stalwart Koneru Humpy suffered a massive heartbreak in her bid for a third world rapid title, finishing with a bronze in the women's section of the FIDE World Rapid Championships after being cruelly done in by the tie-break rule on Sunday.

Former champion Humpy tied for the top spot with China's Zhu Jiner and Russian Grandmaster Aleksandra Goryachkina at 8.5 points, after the 11th and final round.

However, as per the tie-breaker rules to rank players with the same score -- namely Buchholz Cut 1, Buchholz and Average Rapid Rating of the Opponents -- Humpy fell behind Zhu and Goryachkina to settle for the third spot after coming so close to clinching title.

Carlsen reigns supreme

The world No.1 Magnus Carlsen showcased his supremacy by clinching his sixth World Rapid title in the 'Open' category. Russian GM Artemiev (9.5) was second, while Arjun Erigaisi earned a win against Russian GM Aleksandr Shimanov to jump to 9.5 points and secure a bronze

D Gukesh (8.5 points) finished 20th, while Nihal Sarin (8.5) was 19th. R. Praggnanandhaa (8.5) was 27th.

Results: Open Category: Top 3: Men: Magnus Carlsen (Nor) 10.5, 1. Vladislav Artemiev (FIDE) 9.5, 2. Arjun Erigaisi (Ind) 9.5, 3. **Women:** Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE) 8.5, (Tiebreaker 1.5), 1. Zhu Jiner (Chn) 8.5 (Tiebreaker 0.5), 2. Koneru Humpy (Ind) 8.5.

Koneru Humpy finished third despite being tied for the top spot as tricky tie-breaker rules come into play.

Karnataka duo Shikha-Ashwini emerge doubles champions

BENGALURU/ VIJAYWADA, DHNS/ PTI

Karnataka's seasoned duo Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat K ended their six-year title drought at the country's premier domestic badminton event by clinching the women's doubles title at the 87th Senior National Championships in Vijaywada on Sunday.

Shikha and Ashiwini, seeded third, won in straight games against second-seeded Priya Devi Konjengbam of Manipur and Shruti Mishra of Uttar Pradesh 21-14, 21-18 in the final.

Incidentally, the Karnataka pair had endured a semifinal loss to the same opponents in the previous edition of the tournament which was held in Bengaluru last year.

After dominating the opening game, Shikha and Ashiwini — who train at the Yadav Pro Badminton Academy in Bengaluru — were stretched in the second game.

However, a few lucky net cords favoured the world No. 51 pair to capture their second national doubles title after they had topped the podium in the 2019 edition hosted in Guwahati.

Meanwhile in the singles finals, Surya Charishma Tamiri defeated Tanvi Patri and Rithvik Sanjeevi got the better of Bharat Raghav to win the women's and men's titles, respectively.

The 19-year-old local girl Surya defeated Tanvi 17-21, 21-12, 21-14 in the women's singles final which lasted close to an hour.

In the men's singles final, Rithvik relied on his superior defence and composure to overcome Bharat 21-16, 22-20.

At the midway stage in the opening game of the women's final, Tanvi took control of the match and frustrated her opponent to induce unforced errors.

One such error happened at 6-5 in the second game as Surya hit a service return in the net.

But the service judge called it a fault for height which gave her a reprieve.

Surya then went on to win seven consecutive points to take control of the second game. In the decider, Surya engaged Tanvi in long rallies and the tiredness began to show on the youngster.

Though Tanvi tried to keep pace with her opponent, she clearly ran out of steam as Surya wrapped up the match with six straight points from 15-14 onwards.

In the men's singles final, Rithvik, having pocketed the opening game without much trouble, was under pressure in the second game as his opponent took a 9-5 lead.

The 2024 Odisha Masters winner Rithvik bagged six consecutive points to regain the lead and it felt like he would cruise to win, before two bad judgement calls allowed Bharat to fight back and even earn a game point.

But to his credit, Rithvik kept his cool and stuck to his game plan and wrapped up the match in 39 minutes.

The experienced pair of Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat K clinched the women's doubles crown, beating second seeds Priya Devi Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra 21-14, 21-18.

In the men's doubles final, the top seeds Hariharan Amsakarunan and R Ruban Kumar defeated Mithileish P Krishnan and Prejan 21-17, 21-12.

Sathwik Reddy K and Radhika Sharma, second seeds, upset top-billed Ashith Surya and Amrutha P 21-9, 21-15 to clinch the mixed doubles title.

Karnataka's Shikha Gautam (left) and Ashwini Bhat K pose after winning the women's doubles title at the 87th Senior National Badminton Championships in Vijaywada on Sunday.

Curator in a 'state of shock' after MCG carnage

MELBOURNE, AFP: Melbourne Cricket Ground head curator Matt Page **(in pic)** said on Sunday he was in a "state of shock" watching the carnage unfold during the two-day fourth Ashes Test which has left Cricket Australia facing millions of dollars in revenue shortfall.

Page and his team left 10 millimetres of grass on the wicket, providing fast bowlers with excessive seam movement and bounce which made batting treacherous.

Thirty-six wickets tumbled in 142 overs, 20 on the first day, and the game was all over in the evening session of day two as England won by four wickets for their first victory in Australia since January 2011.

More than 90,000 fans were expected for day three and many more for days four and five.

But with ticket sales having to be refunded, Cricket Australia faces another big financial hit after the Ashes series opener in Perth also ended within two days.

Chief executive Todd Greenberg on Sunday estimated that the Melbourne shortfall alone would cost the governing body more than Aus$10 million (US 6.7 million). It is the first time the same series has had multiple two-day Tests for 129 years, dating back to the time when wickets were left uncovered to the weather.

"I was in a state of shock," Page said.

"I've never been involved in a Test match like it and hopefully never involved in a Test match like that again.

"We know this hasn't gone as we planned. We will look at what we need to do to improve."

A year ago the grass on the pitch had been shaved down to seven millimetres and produced a thrilling Test that went all the way to the final session on day five as Australia beat India.

Page said that cool and wet weather leading into this year's Test combined with forecast heat on days three and four meant he had needed to take a different approach.

"We're trying to balance that contest between bat and ball throughout, over the four or five days, to provide that captivating Test for all," he said. "We left it longer because we knew we were going to get (hot) weather at the back end that we knew we needed our grass (for)."

K'taka water polo teams storm into finals

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka boys' and girls' water polo teams sailed into the final of the South Zone Aquatics Championships with comfortable victories over Andhra Pradesh in the semifinals on Sunday. Meanwhile, Karnataka's Anish Aniruddha Kore won the 100m butterfly blue ribband event with a timing of 58.20 seconds.

Results: Swimming: Boys: U-1): 800m freestyle: Renukacharya Hodmani (Kar), 9:04.66 seconds, 1; Akshaj Parigi (Kar), 9:19.57, 2. **200m individual medley:** Sreehari B (Ker), 2:13.92, 1; Raghav Swachandam (Kar), 2:14.07, 2; Surya J T (Kar), 2:19.28, 3. **100m butterfly:** Anish Aniruddha Kore (Kar), 58.20, 1; Aryan Abhijit Patil (Kar), 58.95, 3. **50m backstroke:** Clifford Joseph (Ker), 28.32, 1; Aryan Abhijit Patil (Kar), 28.47, 2; Kushal K (Kar), 28.82, 3. **400m Individual medley:** Raghav Swachandam (Kar), 4:51.16, 1; Surya JT (Kar), 5:02.97, 2. **100m freestyle:** Sreehari B (Ker), 54.08, 1; Surya JT (Kar), 55.52, 2; Kushal K (Kar), 56.17, 3. **200m butterfly:** Swaroop Dhanuche (Kar), 2:13.45, 1; Vedanta V Madhira (Kar), 2:13.92, 2. **4x200m freestyle relay:** Karnataka 8:14.33, 1. **U-14: 800m freestyle:** Shreyas Sunil (Kar), 9:16.01, 1; Rohan G D (Kar), 9:36.32, 2. **200m Individual medley:** Aarav J (Kar), 2:24.38, 1; Saatvik Singh (Kar), 2:26.84, 2. **100m butterfly:** Eshan Nabil (Ker), 1:02.98, 1; Aarav J (Kar), 1:03.28, 2; Sai Ranjan Madhukar (Kar), 1:03.80, 3. **50m backstroke:** S Krish (Kar), 29.80, 1. **400m Individual medley:** Aarav J (Kar), 5:06.52, 1; Vaibhav P N (Kar), 5:17.98, 2. **100m freestyle:** Shreyas Sunil (Kar), 59.33, 1. **4x200m freestyle relay:** Karnataka 8:52.30, 1. **Girls: U-17: 800m freestyle:** Adithi Vinayak Relekar (Kar), 9:53.58, 1; Mihika Dutta (Kar), 10:16.19, 3. **200m individual medley:** Pavani Sarayu N (AP), 2:36.86, 1; Hitashree N (Kar), 2:41.81, 3. **100m butterfly:** Mokshitha Addanki (Tel), 1:09.55, 1; Hitashree N (Kar), 1:11.90, 3. **50m backstroke:** Aarna Hegde (Kar), 32:78, 1. **400m individual medley:** Pavani Sarayu N (AP), 5:39.90, 1; Hitashree N (Kar), 5:45.81, 2; Prathiksha N Gowda (Kar), 5:46.32, 3. **100m freestyle:** Tisya Sonar (Kar), 1:02.26, 1; Mihika Dutta (Kar), 1:03.49, 3. **200m butterfly:** Vaishnavi G (Kar), 2:45.81, 1; Janya BS (Kar), 2:52.12, 3. **4x200m freestyle relay:** Karnataka (Kar), 9:31.06, 1. **U-14: 800m freestyle:** Tanvi Gaurav (Kar), 10:09.12, 1; Idika Bhat (Kar), 10:14.71, 2. **200m individual medley:** Alakananda Raju (Ker), 2:39.79, 1; Manya R Wadhwa (Kar), 2:42.94, 3. **100m butterfly:** Manya R Wadhwa (Kar), 1:09.65, 1; Aadya Bharadwaj (Kar), 1:10.58, 2. **50m backstroke:** Shreya Binil (Ker), 32.66, 1. **400m individual medley:** Alakananda Raju (Ker), 5:44.65, 1; Venyashree P (Kar), 5:58.79, 3. **100m freestyle:** Tanvi Gaurav (Kar), 1:03.52, 1; Auna A P (Kar), 1:04.34, 3. **4x200m freestyle relay:** Karnataka 9:39.30, 1. **Water polo: Semifinals: Boys:** Karnataka: 23 bt Andhra Pradesh: 4. **Girls:** Karnataka: 19 bt Andhra Pradesh: 0.

Pipers blank Royals in HIL opener

RANCHI, PTI: Captain Navneet Kaur and Teresa Viana scored a goal each as SG Pipers defeated Ranchi Royals 2-0 in the opening match of the Women's Hockey India League here on Sunday.

Kaur struck in the 27th minute while Viana found the target in the 46th here at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Stadium.

The first quarter of the match was extremely tight with end-to-end action by both the sides. The defenders were on top as not a single penalty corner was given away in the opening minutes.

Hannah Cotter of Ranchi Royals created problems for her opponents on the left flank while the attacking duo of Kaur and Deepika made the majority of circle entries for the SG Pipers in the first half.

Rutuja Dadaso Pisal won the first penalty corner of the evening for Ranchi Royals. However, the opportunity was squandered as Maria Ortiz's drag-flick was saved by the goalkeeper.

On the other end in the 25th minute, SG Pipers won back-to-back penalty corners but Lola Riera's shots on goal were denied by the Royals.

Two minutes later, Pipers won yet another penalty corner but this time, it was successfully converted by their captain Kaur with a powerful shot to score the first goal of the HIL season.

The third quarter saw Ranchi Royals win three more penalty corners but the home side failed to find an equaliser.

The Pipers held onto their lead in the remaining minutes of the match to claim a crucial win and begin their campaign on a dominant note.

SG Pipers beat Ranchi Royals 2-0 on Sunday. HI MEDIA

Pakistan kabaddi player Rajput banned

KARACHI, PTI: A well-known Pakistan international kabaddi player, Ubaidullah Rajput, has been banned indefinitely by the national federation after he appeared for an Indian team in a private tournament in Bahrain earlier this month.

The Pakistan Kabaddi Federation (PKF) imposed the ban following an emergency meeting on Saturday, finding Rajput guilty of travelling abroad to play in the tournament without obtaining a mandatory no-objection certificate (NOC) from the federation or other relevant authorities. PKF secretary Rana Sarwar said Rajput has the right to appeal before a disciplinary committee.

Sarwar said the federation took serious note of the fact that Rajput not only travelled overseas without an NOC but also represented a team from India, wore its jersey andwrapped the Indian flag around his shoulders.

ISL clubs seek further clarity

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

The start of the much-delayed Indian Super League is eventually moving towards a consensus as all clubs are largely in agreement with the Indian football body's (AIFF) recently suggested 20-year proposal plan. However, where will the operational cost of over Rs 70 crore come from remains the major concern.

AIFF's proposed a more acceptable revenue distribution model (in a 10-50-40 ratio among the federation, clubs and commercial partners respectively) while each club would pay a 'standard participation fee' of Rs 1 crore annually has convinced many.

Finding the commercial partner, especially after AIFF found no takers when it floated the tender earlier with an overly ambitious model, is on the agenda of the clubs, led by Mohun Bagan Super Giants' Vinay Chopra.

The clubs are concerned about the relegation-promotion situation and whether the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) will permit the champions of the ISL and Super Cup to qualify for the continental competitions if they fail to play the minimum number of matches (24) as required in an already truncated season.

"If AFC agrees to drop the cap on the matches in this special situation only then it will be possible to discuss on the ISL format for the season (either a one-legged league system or two Conferences -- east and west -- of seven teams each with the two winners playing a final)," a major club official told *DH* on the condition of anonymity.

"However, nothing is more important than the fact that where will the Rs 70-80 crore to host the league comes from."

As far as the relegation-promotion is concerned, clubs -- barring East Bengal -- have urged not to consider relegation as per last season's result, putting bottom-placed Mohammedan Sporting in the firing line at the cost of I-League champions Inter Kashi. The suggestion instead is to have no relegation while allowing promotion of Kashi.

With so many concerns pending, the Monday's scheduled meeting between AIFF and ISL clubs stands cancelled with the federation urged to seek cognisance of AFC. The meeting could be rescheduled by Tuesday or Wednesday as there is still time before the Supreme Court reopens after its winter break, allowing the stakeholders the time to submit their plans through the Sports ministry on the SC's direction.

ISL clubs urged the AIFF to seek clarity on who will foot the bill on operational cost of over Rs 70 crore. X

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